Damrong Tayanin

Being Kammu

My Village, My Life

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My Village, My Life

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Southeast Asia Program
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My Parents

Mr. Ràw Làaŋ
Mrs. Cíam Mán

In Memoriam

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A Kammu village in China, kúŋ Kmmú tàa Cìin
(Photo Li Daoyong)

PREFACE

Combining facets of autobiography and ethnography this book describes the lifeways, customs, practices, and beliefs of the Kammu people as reflected in the early life experiences of the author. The author is already well known to the community of Southeast Asia scholarship by his Thai name, Damrong Tayanin. This is the name he adopted when he began working at the field station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies (SIAS) in 1973. He was recruited by Dr. Kristina Lindell due to his fame as a Kammu storyteller. Initially Damrong thus worked at the field station in Lampang, northern Thailand. There his duties expanded from preserving Kammu stories and folklore to recording other facets of Kammu life and culture, such as music, practical arts, and shamanism. Eventually he moved to Lund University, Sweden.

Born in 1938 in the province of Namtha, Laos, Damrong's early life was fairly typical of an uplander in Southeast Asia. But from early on he seems to have had a considerable curiosity about the world outside the confines of his village. At the time Damrong began working at Lund University he had learned math from a Lao shopkeeper he had worked for, was conversant in several upland languages, and literate in Lao and Thai. Though his native language has no established alphabet, Damrong learned a Kammu orthography developed by Kristina Lindell and was able to record much of his material in his natal language. Yet, given these accomplishments, Damrong notes he was 36 years old when he had his first encounter with a formal classroom in Lund. Damrong's collaboration with his Lund University colleagues and other Western scholars has resulted in a valuable corpus of scholarly materials on a variety of Kammu subjects. In recognition of his unique achievements and distinctive contribution Lund University conferred a doctorate *Honoris Causa* on Damrong in 1986. In part this book is a record of Damrong's odyssey from Southeast Asian uplander to recognized scholar-researcher.

Damrong's natal people, the Kammu, are one of many groups living in the relatively remote and inaccessible mountainous areas of mainland Southeast Asia. This area roughly separates the Southeast Asian cultural area from that of South Asia to the west and of Sinitic cultures on the north and east. The rugged topography of this region has historically encouraged a considerable degree of ethnic variation and complexity. The area includes peoples speaking numerous local dialects derived from several major language families, Kammu being a Mon-Khmer language. Like many other upland peoples in this area the Kammu typically are swidden ("shifting") cultivators whose traditions are grounded in and maintained by oral forms, such as myths, legends, and folktales. Thus, Kammu culture is maintained in the memories and practices of the Kammu people. This is in contrast to the politically dominant lowland peoples of this area, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese, living in neighboring valleys

and practicing wet rice agriculture, whose cultures are grounded and maintained in literate traditions, Theravada Buddhist or Sinitic.

For much of their histories the various upland peoples had limited contacts with their lowland neighbors, who typically viewed uplanders with disdain as "uncivilized" and, among other things, fair game for exploitation and slavery. The Kammu are distinctive in that they played a special role in Lao royal ceremonies held in Luang Prabang in which the hegemony of the Lao over the entire land was asserted and symbolically displayed. (In this book Damrong records a Kammu tradition that the Kammu not only preceded the Lao in the land but that it was a Kammu who originally built and ruled Luang Prabang.) The era of French colonial domination increased contact between uplanders and lowlanders through the expansion of corvée labor obligations and the requirement to pay taxes in cash, which involved the registration of uplanders with lowland officials. Damrong conveys some of the qualitative dimensions of upland/lowland relations, including stratagems of uplanders' resistance to lowland authority as well as occasional lowlander acts of kindness.

From the 1950s on, the upland areas of Laos and Vietnam became battlefields in the warfare between lowland-based groups contending for political control. Some upland peoples, such as the Hmong, became active participants in this warfare, but virtually all uplanders were affected in some degree by the conflicts. Some uplanders joined with numerous lowland peoples who left their home areas, becoming refugees attempting to escape the war. Among these refugees were numerous Kammu who joined the diaspora of Southeast Asians relocating in Western countries. Such Kammu were cut off totally from the concrete realities and the physical and social milieu in which their lives had traditionally been located. With the end of active warfare the upland peoples who remained in their native locales faced increasing pressures from national governments dominated by lowland peoples to give up traditional practices and adopt new ways sanctioned by national and/or ideological goals. Uplanders such as the Kammu are pressed to give up swidden cultivation (deemed to be ecologically unsound by lowland governments) and to attend schools in which national languages and curricula estrange them from their traditional social-cultural forms. Thus, whether Kammu left the uplands to become refugees, or remained behind, their culture is at risk. One of Damrong's aims in writing this book is "to help preserve my own language, religion, and culture" for these Kammu who face the loss, estrangement, or disappearance of their traditional ways.

Damrong not only hopes to help maintain Kammu culture for his own people, but also to illustrate that the "Kammu kind of knowledge" has intrinsic value. He comments, "Perhaps this [book] will convince readers that there are different kinds of knowledge. People living in the countryside may not possess the standard knowledge acquired in schools, but that certainly does not mean they do not know anything. They know that which is important to them, and I am thankful to the elders in my home village who shared their knowledge with me." And as these elders shared their knowledge with Damrong, he shares with his fellow Kammu and the Western reader as well.

While preservation of his native culture and showing its value to his readers are the primary aims of this book, its genesis was a meeting Damrong had with the distinguished Swedish ethnologist Karl Gustav Izikowitz shortly after his arrival in Sweden. Izikowitz's classic study of the Lamet (self-designation *Rmeet*) deals with an upland people culturally similar to and neighboring the Kammu in Laos. After talking with Damrong about the Lamet and the Kammu, Izikowitz urged him to write his

autobiography. Izikowitz, who remained Damrong's friend until his death, realized that Damrong had the ability to do what no foreign researcher, however talented, could do: report and describe the culture and life of the Kammu as they themselves live and experience it—from the perspective of an "insider." Thus Damrong states: "It is my intention to describe the village and (Kammu) life as we ourselves see it, and I try to let the readers understand what we ourselves regard as important." It is this "insider's" perspective in particular that makes this volume distinctive.

Combining as it does autobiography and ethnography, the book is not fully either. Many facets of the author's life are not recorded here. And, many aspects of Kammu life and culture are not touched on, as they might be in a comprehensive ethnography. Additionally, though the author of this book is Damrong Tayanin, its major protagonist is Kàm Ràw, the Kammu youth, farmer and hunter, storyteller, and sometime shaman who subsequently "became" Damrong. While Damrong remains very much a Kammu, his experiences as a researcher-scholar in the West add a dimension to his story. He is able to see both the similarities and the differences between Kammu "taboo days" and Western "holidays," for example. And he is able to identify the intermarrying groups found in his village as "totemic," which young Kàm Ràw most likely could not. The book itself consists of a succession of short units, often episodic in form with some redundancy throughout. It might well be viewed as a series of "stories" narrated by Damrong/Kàm Ràw, the teller of Kammu tales. In form and structure the chapters evoke an "oral" quality, displaying a fidelity to the Kammu manner of life, and give "voice" to a people rarely allowed to speak for themselves. For those new to the study of Southeast Asian uplanders the book provides an unaffected entry. Those already acquainted with upland peoples will find much that is familiar but presented through the "insider's" perspective that Damrong brings to bear. This perspective illuminates aspects of upland life such as the Kammu marriage system and swidden farming that have sometimes been obscured by abstract theorizing or lowlanders' prejudice.

Damrong's point of departure is his natal village, Rmcùal. Surrounded by a band of forest, the village has an inner and an outer aspect distinguished by village gates. Outside the gates is the house of the village spirits where communal ceremonies are held supervised by a hereditary village priest. Also outside the gates are the barns built on piles where the harvest is stored and several burial areas where different categories of dead are interred in separate areas. Inside the gates are the family houses, also built on piles, and under which livestock, firewood, and other items are stored. Houses also have altars to household ancestral spirits where ceremonies are performed. In addition there are family work houses, smithies where metal work may be done, and "common houses." While houses are the locus of family life, Damrong observes that they are "owned by women." At an early age boys leave their natal household to live in common houses with other unmarried men and learn the lore and practical arts of Kammu life from their elders. While membership in households is based on totemic kinship and marriage, membership in common houses is based on geographic proximity to the family home rather than kinship as such. A recurrent theme in the book is how gender separates and joins various segments of the Kammu social order, with women often getting higher marks than men.

Swidden agriculture is also a prominent feature in the book, reflecting how deeply embedded the Kammu are in the physical environment and seasonal cycle. Swidden cultivation requires access to relatively large areas of forested land used in a complex cycle of fallowing and cultivation. Rmcùal is fortunate in having large

amounts of land available, permitting the village to remain located in one locale for an extended period. This stability indicates that the view of swidden farming as ecologically threatening does not hold true across the board. Indeed, under appropriate conditions of population in relation to land available, swidden agriculture may be an optimal adaptive strategy for regions such as upland Southeast Asia in the hands of people such as the Kammu.

The embeddedness of the Kammu in their specific locale is reflected in Damrong's ability to produce from memory a map of over fifty streams that were located near Rmcùal and to list and identify the numerous villages and ethnicities of people living nearby Rmcùal. This intimate local knowledge allows the Kammu to "read" the natural order around them and to "hear" it speak to them. Thus, Damrong notes, the practiced eye can tell the relative age of villages by observing the band of forest around a village, the depth of the tracks used by (semi-) domestic animals, and the sturdiness of houses and barns. The seasons and various portents and omens are revealed by listening to the sounds of various insects, birds, and animals. And, given the rugged terrain in which Kammu live, distance may be converted into time. Thus, the Chinese salt mines where the people of Rmcùal go to purchase or trade for salt are five days and five nights away, as is "Thailand." To go to Luang Prabang might take a month.

The farming cycle and the seasonal cycle are closely connected for the Kammu, who use a lunar system which is periodically adjusted by observation of the environment. Time is important for the Kammu not only because of farming. Damrong describes Kammu time as involving the intersection of two distinct cycles, one based on ten, the other on twelve. Among other things birthdays (occurring every ten days), the intersection of the two calendrical cycles, and other factors may produce "taboo days," either individual or collective. Tabooed days and times limit what activities can be carried out, producing a kind of temporal "division of labor," for Kammu believe it is not good to do several things at the same time.

The Kammu world is animated by various spiritual entities, some generally benign, such as "ancestral spirits," others more malevolent, such as the feared "tiger spirit" or the "water elephant spirit." People have "souls" that may be frightened away or need reinforcement through ceremonial means. At harvest the spirit of "waste" should be chased away, while "wealth" and "prosperity" have spiritual dimensions to be enticed. Even the highly valued long wooden drums, which mark a family's wealth or a village's prosperity, have a "soul." While ancestral spirits are generally benign, they may also visit transgressions of taboos with refusal to protect against illness or painful accident. The Kammu spirit world is neither awesome nor abstract. It is proximate and approachable through the intervention of shamans or through the performance of animal sacrifices. Damrong relates an occasion when animal sacrifices to ancestral spirits brought cures to some ill kin. He observes, "From that day on, I felt sure that I have GOOD and KIND Ancestors." Perhaps this conviction of the goodness, kindness, and approachability of these spiritual protectors makes violation of taboos less threatening for some Kammu.

Another recurrent refrain in this volume relates to Kammu social organization, particularly their form of marriage. There has been a voluminous and often heated discussion amongst anthropologists about a form of marriage ("matrilateral cross cousin marriage") which is practiced by the Kammu. While the anthropological discussion has involved matters of high theory, Damrong's description of Kammu marriage illuminates its practical working and how the marriage system weaves

through the fabric of Kammu society. Damrong records that Rmcùal village includes three marriage "alliance" groups. Each group includes a number of families who share a totemic affiliation that differs among the alliance groups. From the perspective of an individual Kammu, he and his alliance group relate to the other two alliance groups in different ways. From one of the other alliance groups, his group obtains its wives. This group is referred to by Damrong as "wife givers" and includes one's "father-in-law." (Both are called *eèm.*) One's own group provides wives (i.e., one's "daughters" and/or "sisters") to the other group, which is referred to as "wife takers" and includes one's "son-in-law." (Both called *khə́əy.*) Any marriage which violates the direction set out by the set of marriage alliance groups is strongly tabooed and believed likely to produce dire consequences. The affiliations among the marriage alliance groups also establish a host of other obligations and responsibilities, including respect, mutual aid, and services. In the anthropological literature on this form of marriage, it is often correlated with considerable difference in rank or status among the alliance groups, with "wife givers" ranking highest. Though Damrong notes that the Kammu "father-in-law" ("wife giver") is highly honored by those who receive wives from him, the Kammu appear to be a relatively egalitarian people. Damrong's presentation of Kammu marriage alliance groups and description of the various responsibilities each group has on the occasion of building or rebuilding a house may be the best available account of the feeling, tone, and operation of this intriguing marriage system.

These brief comments are not intended to be an exhaustive catalog of the matters contained in Damrong's book. They are intended to highlight a number of recurrent themes which weave through this volume. Presented from the perspective of the "insider," the book adds a dimension to our understanding of upland peoples like the Kammu that has, till now, been all too absent.

Perhaps it is appropriate to conclude by citing a metaphor that Damrong uses in several places contrasting the Kammu past and their future. In his chapter on "Messages" he begins:

> A long time ago there was darkness. That there was darkness means that the Kammu people could not read, could not write, like a blind person who cannot see the world. There was also silence, and that there was silence means that the Kammu people who lived in the forest could not hear any news. There was no radio, of course, no newspapers, and there was no way to learn about the world.

The contrastive movement from darkness and silence to light and sound applies very well to Damrong's personal odyssey. We can only hope that the implicit optimism conveyed by this image will also apply to the Kammu people generally. But, under any circumstance, Damrong has ably fulfilled his aim to record and preserve Kammu culture for them, and for us.

A. Thomas Kirsch
Ithaca, NY
February 1992

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Biographical Sketch

Damrong Tayanin is my Thai name, but Kàm Ràw is my Kammu name. My father's name was Ràw Làaŋ and my grandfather's name was Làaŋ ..... Then I do not know the second part of my great-grandfather's name. My father used his father's name Làaŋ as his last name, and I, my brothers, and my sister use our father's first name Ràw as our last name.

I was born in a Kammu village called Rmcùal in 1938. According to the Kammu calendar the year was pii Plák-Ñìi. I have five elder brothers. Their names are: Mán Ràw, Míin Ràw, Càŋ Ràw, Ñìi Ràw, and Wáaŋ Ràw. I have only one sister, an elder sister. Her name is Mìaŋ Ràw. I am the youngest child of my parents.

The question of names in Kammu society is so complicated that it needs some explanation.

When my eldest brother Mán Ràw got his first son, people began to call him Sét Mán's Father, because his first child's name is Sét. Sét has his father's name after his own, and thus Mán is his last name. Míin Ràw is now called Kwàay Míin's Father. Míin Ràw has three daughters, and Kwàay Míin is the eldest daughter, Tìaŋ Míin is the second, and Móɔ Míin is the youngest daughter. However, people do not call their father Tìaŋ Míin's Father or Móɔ Míin's Father, since the Kammu name the parents only after the first child, regardless of whether the first child is a son or a daughter.

When people talk to someone, they may say something like: "Mán, what are you doing?" This is a polite way to speak to people. However, it is more friendly if you say: "Mán Ràw, what are you doing?"

I got the name Kàm, because when I was born, I was so weak that people of my family came to "kàm" me, that is, help me by sacrificing to the spirits. My second name, Ràw, is my father's first name. According to tradition I should now be called Krister Kàm's Father, because the name of my eldest son is Krister Kàm. He was born in Sweden and therefore has a Swedish name.

In my childhood there was no school in the Rmcùal area, and I have never been to school, not even a single hour. Later, in 1948, the Lao government started to build a village school in Mòŋ Knìŋ village (Tasaeng Knuang Pheat village).

One of my elder brothers, Ñìi Ràw, was the first schoolboy in our village. However, Mòŋ Knìŋ village was not near our home village. It took one hour to walk through the jungle from my village to the school. While Ñìi was in school, I and some others boys from our village had to bring food and rice to him. When I came to the school, I used to stand outside the window and watch the students. I looked and listened to how they read and talked in the lowland Lao language. We brought food and rice and gave it to Ñìi and to his teacher once a week.

However, we were not allowed to come inside the school, even if we were interested in learning to write and read. Unfortunately they did not even let us enter their school.

Thus I was already 36 years of age, when I got my first chance to see a school from the inside—and that was not a Lao school but the University Extension in Lund, Sweden.

At that time I could read and write both Lao and Thai despite the fact that I had not been allowed to go to school. I had managed to learn a lot by listening to the lectures in that school in Mòŋ Knìŋ, and my brother had helped me. Later one of my employers encouraged me to study, and he himself also taught me mathematics.

In 1973, I began to work for the Kammu Language and Folklore Project initiated by Kristina Lindell in the Field Station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies in Lampang in northern Thailand.

In 1974, this project received a grant from the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, and this allowed me to go to Sweden to continue my work on the project at the Department of East Asian Languages, Lund University.

During my stay in Sweden, I have been to northern Thailand several times in order to visit the Kammu villages there. I have worked with many Swedish researchers both at home and in the field, mainly on the language, music, traditional songs, folklore, and religion of the Kammu, and also on swidden agriculture in our part of the world.

For a period I also did fieldwork among the Kammu refugees in the U.S. with Dr. Frank Proschan for his project, Kammu Verbal Art.

During the academic year 1985-86, five Swedish researchers working in the fields of East and Southeast Asian folklore, ethnomusicology, and history of religion proposed that I should be promoted to Doctor Honoris Causa of the Faculty of Arts at Lund University. The proposal was accepted by the Faculty, and in May 1986 I received the insignia in Lund Cathedral.

In 1987 I received a grant as a short time visitor at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. During my stay at the Smithsonian Institution, I again joined the work on the Kammu Verbal Art Project. The work mainly consisted of cataloguing and indexing slides, tapes, and photos from earlier fieldwork, the kind of work in which by now I have great experience.

In 1989, I received a Rockefeller Residency Fellowship in the Humanities for work at the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.

I would like to thank all the Foundations which in various ways have supported the Kammu projects, and which thereby have given me the opportunity to help to preserve my own language, religion, and culture.

Special thanks go to Kristina Lindell, who once found me in the jungle, and who made a path for me to walk into the world and work for my people and our culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume is a product of my work for one year at the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University as a Rockefeller Resident Fellow in the Humanities. The major part of the illustrations are my own drawings and photographs, but some are from other sources. Professor Li Daoyong, Chinese specialist on Mon-Khmer languages, has kindly permitted me to use some pictures from Kammu villages in southern China. The picture of a young Kammu boy comes from Professor Joel M. Halpern's unique collection of pictures from Laos in the 1950s. Strange as it may seem, there can be no doubt that the young boy is me. I remember that a Westerner took a picture of me in Namtha, but I never thought that more than 30 years later I would meet the man again in Amherst, Massachusetts in the U.S.A.

In 1973, I began my work with the Kammu Language and Folklore Project, started in 1972 by Kristina Lindell at the Field Station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies at Lampang in northern Thailand.

In 1974, the project got a grant from the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This grant made it possible for me to travel to Sweden and begin my work on the Kammu Language and Folklore Project in the Department of East Asian Languages at Lund University.

Then the Swedish Bank Tercentenary Foundation supported my work for six years, and after that a new grant from the Research Council made it possible for me to work on the project "The Kammu Village; A Southeast Asian Minority Society" for another six years.

After that period the Crafoord Foundation provided means for my work.

In 1989, I received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation as a Resident Fellow in the Humanities at the Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University. This made it possible for me to write this volume.

I am deeply indebted to Kristina Lindell for her encouragement and her efforts to preserve the Kammu culture—religion, language, traditions, and customs.

Special thanks are due to all the Kammu people who have been working with us both in Southeast Asia and in the West. Even if this volume is not considered valuable to them today, it contains some of our traditions, customs, and rituals.

I have searched through libraries both in Sweden and in the United States, but I was unable to find any book written by a Kammu author. However, I have found some few books written by Westerners mentioning the Kammu. They wrote what they knew and what they have seen—some of them do it very well indeed—but they see Kammu life as outsiders and have been in the villages only for short periods of time. I, on the other hand, was born and grew up in a Kammu village and I can therefore give an inside picture of it. It is my intention to describe the village and life

there as we ourselves see it, and I try to let the readers understand what we ourselves regard as important.

At the same time I hope to preserve our kind of knowledge. Perhaps this will convince the readers that there are different kinds of knowledge. People living in the countryside may not possess the standard knowledge acquired in schools, but that certainly does not mean that they do not know anything. They know that which is important to them, and I am thankful to the elders in my home village who shared their knowledge with me.

The most deeply felt thanks, however, go to all those who gave grants to the Kammu Projects so that we are able to preserve some small part of the Kammu culture and some memories of Kammu village life.

Ithaca, May 1990
Damrong Tayanin

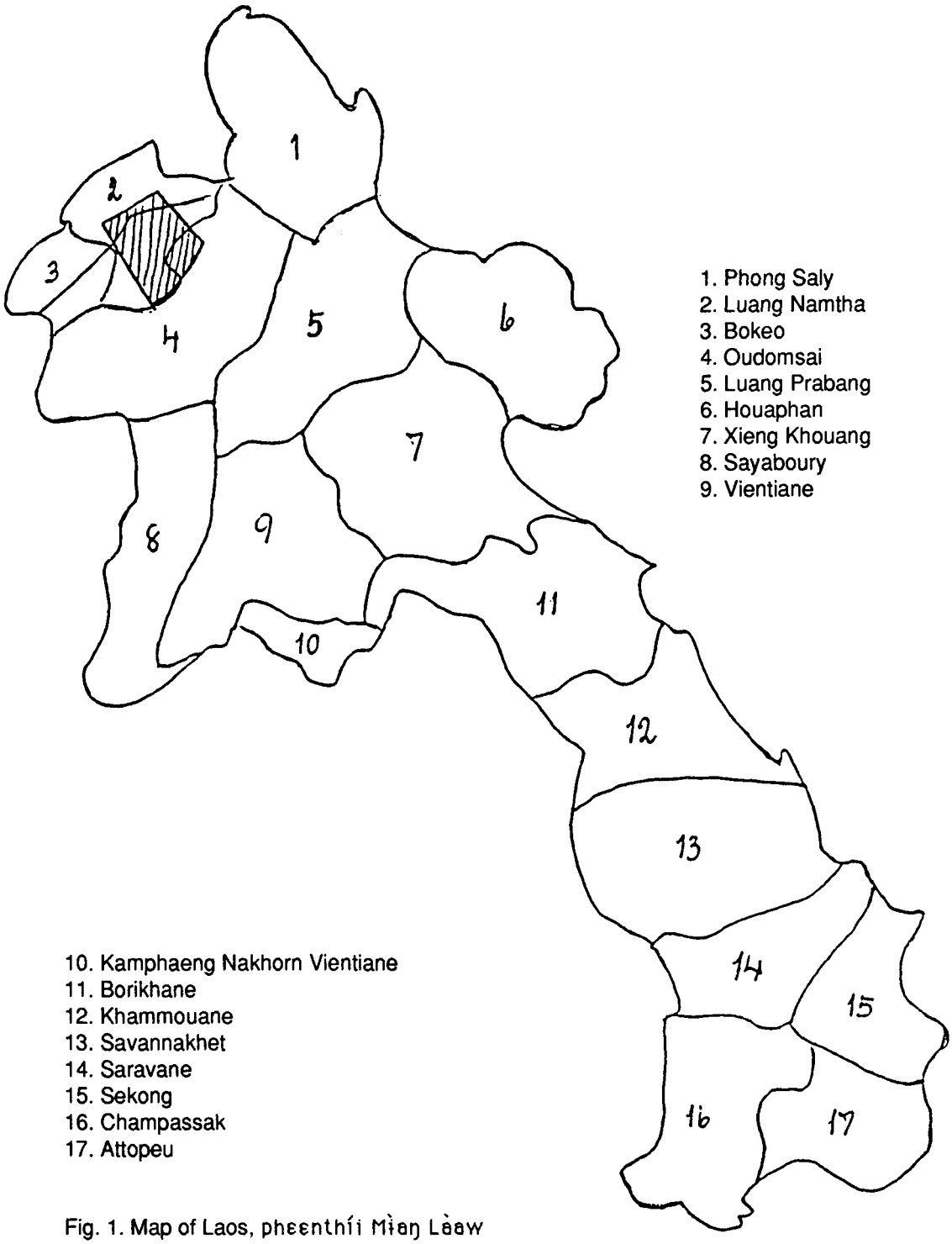

Fig. 1. Map of Laos, pheenthíi Mìan Làaw

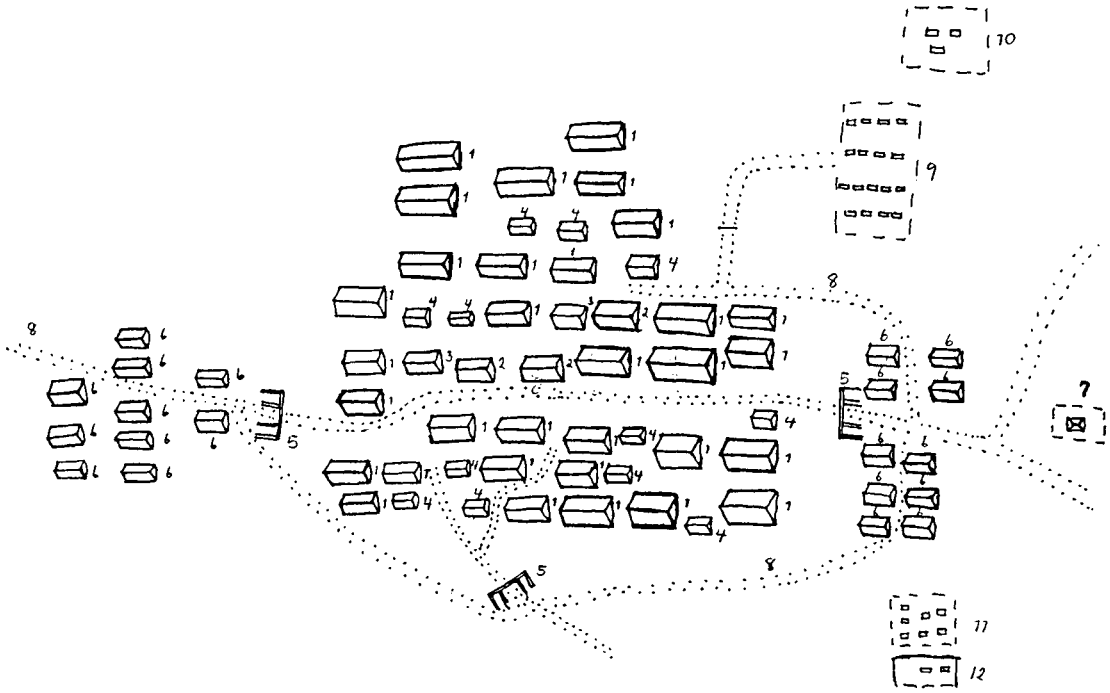

Fig. 2. Map of Rmcùal Village, phɛ́ɛnthii kúŋ Rmcùal

1. Family houses.
2. Common-houses.
3. Smithies.
4. Family work houses.
5. Village gates.
6. Barns.
7. The àay ràk spirits' house.
8. Paths.
9. Burial place for persons who died a normal death.
10. Burial place for persons who died by accident.
11. Burial place for children and mutes.
12. Place where people keep the clothes of people who died far away from their village and whose bodies could not be brought home.

I

THE VILLAGE AND THE HOUSE

1. The Kammu Village, Kúŋ Kmmú

Approaching the Village

Most Kammu villages are situated on mountain ranges, halfway up the mountain. There is a belt of real jungle with high old trees around the village, and you walk through the jungle for at least 1000 meters from the village before you reach the area where the fields are made.

This is a precautionary measure against wildfire which often occurs when the fields are burned. Even if the fire should flare up in the burning process, the village will be sheltered behind the high trees, which do not catch fire easily. When there is such a belt of trees around the village, it is also sheltered against the storms which often arise in the area. Also an ordinary wind loses its force when it meets the high trees, and the villages are therefore usually very calm and pleasant.

Within this belt of old jungle around the village the most sacred spots of the village are found:

1. The burial ground, kît.

Within the kît there are graves for different categories of people, for we do not bury them together. Thus you find:

a. The graves of grown-ups, hrmàan kɔ́ɔn rìñ.
b. The graves of small children, hrmàan kɔ́ɔn ñè.
c. The graves of people who have died in accidents, hrmàan h'éep.
d. The graves of mute people, hrmàan kòn plò.

2. The place where clothes are forsaken.

If a person dies far away from his village, so that the dead body cannot be brought home, he will be buried in the forest of another village. People will then take some of his or her clothes and abandon them in this place.

3. The place where the àay ràk (village spirits) spirits live.

These three tabooed places are all situated within this belt of old jungle and usually to the west of the village.

If you walk along the mountain ranges you walk through young forest, since people have made fields almost everywhere. The mountain slopes are covered with areas where people make fields. When you walk at a distance, you will notice a place where there is old jungle on top of a mountain range, and you understand that there will be a village hidden among those high old trees.

Already from a distance you will be able to judge whether a village is old or if it has been erected recently. An old village is hidden among high, old trees, it is surrounded by thick jungle, and the houses cannot be seen until you have walked past the belt of trees. A new village on the other hand is situated in young forest, just ordinary forest which does not hide the houses.

It is also possible to recognize an old village from the trees that are planted there. Around an old village or in the gardens near it there will be such fruit trees as tamarind, hmpɔ́ɔr, pomelo, mǎk púk, mango, lŋìi, and jackfruit, mǎk mìi. There will also be the biggest bamboo, spɔ́, which people plant around their village to have it close at hand.[1]

A trained eye will also recognize an old village from the deep water buffalo and cow tracks surrounding it. When the buffaloes and cows walk along, almost always following the same tracks, the tracks will become deeper and deeper as time goes by. In some places the track gets so very deep that the buffaloes and cows are unable to walk there any longer. The track is then so deep that a grown man vanishes if he jumps down into it.

Newer villages do not have such deep tracks of water buffaloes and cows around them. Nor are there any planted trees that have had time enough to grow big around new villages.

Regarding new villages, they are usually built by people who move away from an old village to build a new one within the area of their own home village. They may move because parts of their old village have been destroyed by fire. Sometimes people move out of an old village and build a new one because they have difficulty in supporting themselves or have encountered some other trouble.

To erect a new village and build new family houses is a very great undertaking. If one wants to build the same way as in an old village, ten to twenty years will be spent on the work. One will have to spend hundreds of thousands or even millions of kip on it, if one really wants the new village and its houses to be like those in a fine and comfortable old village.

The cost is due to the fact that there are many facilities and things that belong not to the various families, or houses as we say, but to the entire village. Each house also has to possess a lot of different things before it can be considered to be fully equipped.

One of the most heavy building enterprises a family has to undertake is to build a wooden barn. The piles of a good barn are always made of heavy, resistant wood. They are also very thick, so that they can stand upright on the stones that are placed as foundations on the ground. The piles are not dug down into the soil, because if the ends are hidden in the ground or even touch the soil, termites will attack them and eat their way up into the barn.

It requires several strong men to carry a single one of such piles, and the trees are often sought out far away from the village, even if it is an old village with many big trees near it. The big trees around the village may never ever be touched. It is said that people who cut down big trees in the vicinity of a village will be punished by the village spirits and probably they or somebody in their family will die. It requires quite some skill to cut and split a very big log, and therefore not every family possesses a good barn. The substitutes made of bamboo last only for two or three

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[1] Cf. Tsuneo Ayabe, "The Houses and Surrounding Land," Laos Project Paper #14, *Japanese Journal of Ethnology* 23 (1959): 3–4.

years before they decay and have to be rebuilt. The solid, wooden barns, on the other hand, can be used for several generations, not just for a few years.

In our family we have no less than four barns. Two of these are made of bamboo, and we have to renew them constantly. The other two are made of wood and are of unknown age. They may have been there already when my great-grandfather was a child. Only the roofs have to be replaced at intervals. The piles and walls are perfectly good.

It goes without saying that many of the things belonging to a village or to a well-equipped family house are far too heavy and cumbersome to be moved to a new village. Therefore many of the things required must be made anew. You recognize a new village also from the fact that almost all the buildings, including their piles, are made of bamboo as they are in a temporary village.

When you are on your way to a village and come close to it, you will first reach the barns, which are always outside the village itself. On the path between the barns and the village there will be a gate, and it is not until you have passed the gate that you are inside the village.

If it is not your home village, you should stop near the barns close to the gate and call out to the people inside the village. You should call and ask them whether there is some taboo in the village or if everything is all right. If you happen to meet some villagers outside the village or on the road there, you could ask them. If you have not met anyone, however, you should stop at the barns and call from there to ask.

When there is no taboo in the village, you may enter. When there is some taboo in the village, on the other hand, you may not enter at all. Instead you have to stay in one of the barns. Some of the villagers will then come out and stay with you under the barn to keep you company if you are alone. People from the village will also come out to bring you water, fire, firewood, mats, and food. Some of them will also come and sell things to you or buy from you if you are on a trading tour.

When a man enters a village, he has to stay in one of the common-houses, because a male guest is not allowed to stay in the family house of another family. A woman—regardless whether she is a relative on the wife-giving or the wife-taking side, or even a lady from far away—may climb the staircase and enter the house without further ado. Lady guests can both sleep and stay in the house. There is no taboo against strange women sleeping in the house, because, after all, the house is the property of the women.[2] A male guest, on the other hand, may not climb up and stay in the house of other families. Should a strange man climb up to stay in the family house, the ancestors of that family would believe that the family was to make a sacrifice to them. Strangers may come and stay in somebody else's family house only when that family makes a sacrifice to their ancestors. The family would incur the wrath of their ancestors if in this way they made them believe that they could expect a sacrifice that is not going to be offered.

Male guests must therefore stay or sleep in one of the common-houses where they will be both welcome and comfortable. When guests come and stay in a common-house, people belonging to that common-house will offer them all they need of food, water, firewood, and mats to sleep on.

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[2] That the women own the houses is explained by the myth "Men and Women"; see story I.1.d in Kristina Lindell, Jan-Öjvind Swahn, and Damrong Tayanin, *Folk Tales From Kammu III: Pearls of Kammu Literature* (London: Curzon Press, 1984), pp. 127–33.

If someone would like to stay with another family forever, as sometimes happens, he (or she because also women sometimes choose to live with a new family) must change his own totem and take on the same totem as the family with whom he will live. In this way he will become a full member of his new family. After he has become a member, the new family can make a sacrifice to their ancestors if something happens to him, for instance, if he falls ill. This is because the ancestors of the new family now have full responsibility for the new member. When he dies, he should be buried in the same grave as the members of his new family; that is, the people who have his new totem. On the other hand, if he is not yet a full member of the family and has another totem,[3] the family may not make a sacrifice to their ancestors when he falls ill, because their ancestors are not responsible for him yet. If he should die, there is no proper grave where he could be buried, because the different graves of the kít are for the members of the different totems.

Tabooing the Village, Crí kúŋ

If there is a taboo on the village, it may be for one of the following reasons:

1. When there is a village ceremony, there is a taboo on the village for one month.

2. When the villagers start to work on a new field, it is taboo for strangers to enter the village at any time during that day. They may not enter again until after the evening meal has been taken. After the evening meal, that is, after sunset, a new day begins.

3. There is a taboo for one day also on the day of the welcoming ceremony for the yèɛr cicada,[4] pkúut yèɛr.

4. It is not taboo for strangers to enter the village when somebody has died there, but strangers may not carry loads into the village themselves. Instead some villagers will come and carry their loads into the village. As soon as the dead body has been buried, this taboo is over.

When you walk along a path and find a sign made of green leaves, you will note that this is a sign which people have made by arranging leaves at the top of a stick after driving the stick down into the earth. If you come across such a sign you may not continue along the path. Usually such a sign made of green leaves is placed at the gate leading into the village or at the edge of a field. When there is a green sign outside the gate, there is a taboo on the village. If it is placed by the field, there is some form of taboo on that field.

The taboos which forbid strangers to enter a field are of several kinds:

1. Entering the field is taboo for one day when the owners drive out spirits from the field, héə ré.

2. While the swidden field is being burned, it is also taboo for strangers and women to enter it. This is also a measure of precaution, of course, since the fire is very dangerous.

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[3] Ibid. There are three groups of totems in Rmcùəl village. One group has a plant totem; the second group has a bird totem; and the third group has animals with four legs for their totem. See also Kristina Lindell, Rolf Samuelsson, and Damrong Tayanin, "Kinship and Marriage in Northern Kammu Villages: The Kinship Model," *Sociologus* 29, 1 (1979).

[4] See stories 12 and 13 in Kristina Lindell, Jan-Öjvind Swahn, and Damrong Tayanin, *A Kammu Story-Listener's Tales,* Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 33 (London: Curzon Press, 1977). See also Kristina Lindell et al., *The Kammu Year: Its Lore and Music* (London: Curzon Press, 1982), pp. 64–67.

Another kind of sign is made of bamboo which is cut to look like an arrow and put on a stick which is driven down behind the path. This is a sign of warning against dangerous traps, and the sign points out the direction where the traps are set. When you see this kind of sign, you should not continue in that direction, since you cannot be sure precisely where the hunter has placed these very dangerous traps. Traps of several kinds may easily kill a person.[5]

Boundaries between Villages, Déɛn tìi

In some places there are very clear boundaries between the domains of two villages in that there is a strip of high, virgin forest. In other places people have erected stones in order to mark the boundary line. Sometimes there is nothing at all to indicate the boundaries, but people living in the area will always know where the boundaries are. People coming from distant places will not be able to tell where the boundaries are, however, unless they are properly marked.

The distance between villages varies greatly. Some villages are so close that it only takes some twenty minutes to walk from one village to the other. Other villages are so far apart that there may be two or three resting places between them, which means that the actual walk takes something like three or four hours.

2. Village Common-Houses, Cɔ̀ɔŋ

A village may have two or even more common-houses depending on the size of the village. A common-house is about as big as an ordinary family house but it is much closer to the ground. It is said that only a pig can walk under a common-house, while a man may stand upright under a family house. Usually a common-house has two doors, and a long fireplace goes all the way across the house from one door to the other. The fireplace is made of a big bottomless wooden box placed directly on the ground and filled with earth.

The villagers belong to one of the common-houses,[6] and thereby the village is divided in sections, since each family belongs to the common-house which is nearest to its family house. The attachment to a common-house thus does not depend on local lineage or other family ties. A family may, for instance, belong to the southern, the northern, or the central common-house.[7] Anyone belonging to a common-house is responsible for keeping it clean and in good repair. The members of the common-house must also receive and entertain guests staying there. Death rites, marriages, hunting rites, etc., are held in the common-house to which the family belongs. There may be anywhere between five and twenty families belonging to the same common-house.

In the common-house there are beds for the boys and the unmarried young men who sleep there. The fire is kept going almost all the time, since the young men often

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[5] For Kammu traps see Damrong Tayanin and Kristina Lindell, *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village,* Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Studies in Asian Topics No 14 (London: Curzon Press, 1990).

[6] In Frank M. Lebar, "Ethnographic Notes on the Khamu" (s.l.: s.n., 1965), p. 7. it is said: "Auxiliary structures include a community or men's house, cɔ̀ɔŋ, sometimes more than one in a village."

[7] In Rmcùal the southern common-house is situated at the lower part of the village, the northern one is at the upper part of the village, and the central common-house is in the center of the village.

cook there. Sometimes they eat there, but often they carry the ready-cooked food to the family house to eat with their families.

The attachment to the common-house is very strong. Boys gradually move out of their family house, sometimes as young as five or six years of age. At first they spend some time there every day; then they also begin to sleep there. It is therefore in the common-house they form friendships with boys of other families and it is there they get to know the grown-up men of their section of the village. At the same time the common-house serves as a school where the boys learn the arts of basket-weaving and trap-building. It is also mainly in the common-house that the boys are introduced to Kammu culture, and it is there more than anywhere else that they learn the folklore of their own ethnic group.[8] Folklore and totems are very important, because the Kammu people can remember and recognize their culture and their groups from folklore and totems.

The families who belong to the common-house may keep some of their property on the drying rack over the long fireplace. Especially during the rainy season humidity is very high, but storing things on the rack over the fireplace keeps mold and mildew at bay. They therefore store bamboo strips of different kinds both for tying and for weaving baskets, rat snares, outfits for deathfalls, guns and cross-bows, bamboo mats for drying rice, and all kinds of baskets over the fire. Also dried meat, peppers, and packs of salt are kept on the drying rack.

The dried skulls of big game, such as deer, barking deer, wild boars, and bears, are tied under the roof of the common-house. Above the lintel of each door there is a sacrificial shelf, where the spirits of the village and of the common-house itself are offered food and wine sacrifices. On the floor close to the walls big jars of wine are kept, and above the jars at least one long wooden drum hangs down from the roof. Some common-houses possess more than one drum.

These drums are beaten at certain ceremonies, but they also serve as a fire-alarm. A long wooden drum is a most respected thing and both the making and the giving of a drum are surrounded by rituals. The drums have souls, and therefore have to be treated with respect and great consideration.[9]

3. A Kammu Shaman, Mɔ́ɔ Kmmú

In a very good Kammu village, there should be at least one shaman and one medicine man, since the Kammu people believe in spirits. According to our belief there are hundreds of different kinds of spirits in the jungle. Therefore some Kammu people have to learn how to become shamans.

In my village area, for instance, there were over twenty Kammu villages, but there was only my uncle Sɛ́ɛn who was a shaman in the entire area. Unfortunately he died in 1960. After he died we had to find a shaman from a distant village when we needed one.

In 1958, my uncle Sɛ́ɛn taught me and one of my cousins, Kàm Mán, how to become a shaman. In fact we knew most of the things already, because we had been together with him for years, but now he gave us extra, intensive training for a few months.

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[8] See the chapter "Learning to Hunt" in Tayanin and Lindell, *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village*, pp. 14 ff.

[9] See Håkan Lundström and Damrong Tayanin, "Kammu Gongs and Drums II: The Long Wooden Drum and Other Drums," *Asian Folklore Studies* 40-2 (1981).

To learn how to be a shaman is not easy at all, because one has to learn many different kinds of magic formulas and rites, for instance:

1) Magic for calling lost souls back;
2) Magic for calling out an evil spirit from a patient;
3) Magic for chasing away the lightning-spirit;
4) Magic for chasing away the rklàk-spirit;[10]
5) Magic for chasing away the tiger-spirit;[11]
6) Magic for chasing away the water elephant-spirit.[12]

I am unable to list all the kinds of different magic formulas in this volume, because there are hundreds of different spirits as I said above. There are specific magic formulas to call the various kinds of spirits.[13]

The suitable period for learning to be a shaman is when the sesame sets flowers, that is, in September and October. This period is the best time for learning the magic formulas. Kammu people believe that if a person learns the magic formulas during this specific time, the spirits will both respect and fear him or her as a shaman.

In a Kammu village there is a village headman, a priest, a shaman, and a medicine man. The village headman works for the government, and both the medicine man and the shaman work in order to help people who are ill. A priest is the person who performs the village ceremony.

When someone catches an illness caused by an evil spirit, that means that a spirit has entered his or her body. A shaman may then chase away the evil spirit from the sick person's body. We cannot heal illnesses caused by spirits by giving the patient medicine; the spirits have to be chased away. On the other hand, when someone has caught an ordinary illness or has wounded himself, the medicine man may use plant medicine to heal the wound or cure the illness.

Anyone could become a village headman, a medicine man, or a shaman, depending on who was able to do the work. The priest, on the other hand, must be of a certain family, since it is a hereditary office. People in that family have become priests generation after generation, but people from other families cannot become priests.

In some villages, one and the same man can have many of these duties, and thus he may in fact be shaman, village headman, medicine man, and priest all at the same time, if he can manage it all.

Before he becomes a shaman, however, he must learn the many magic formulas. Both men and women can become shamans. However, he or she must behave extremely well and follow a lot of specific rules; otherwise the magic formulas will not work, for the spirits will neither respect nor believe a shaman who breaks proper rules of conduct.

There are many occasions on which a shaman has to behave in certain restricted ways; for instance, he is not allowed to eat leftover food. He is not allowed to go in under the house; he is not allowed to use trousers or a belt to wrap around

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[10] Lindell, Swahn and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, p. 199.

[11] Ibid., p. 151.

[12] Lindell, et al, *Kammu Year*, p. 42.

[13] All the magic formulas and the names of the different kinds of spirits will appear in a forthcoming volume, "The Kammu Shaman."

his head instead of a turban as other people sometimes do. If he breaks one of these taboos, he will either fall ill or the spirits will disrespect him.

The shaman also has to walk in a special way, and he must talk very clearly. Otherwise the spirits will not believe him.

A shaman should know and remember all the correct times, such as when the old moon is down and when new moon appears. The shaman must know how many days have passed since the new moon appeared. For instance, when something bad or something good happens and a shaman consults the spirits, he or she must choose the right phase of the moon, the correct day, and the proper time. If he does not know the phase of the moon and which day and what time it is, he cannot find the correct answer.

4. Spirits and Illness, Róoy káp chɨ́a lòok

Most Kammu people are animists, but some are Buddhists, and some are Christians. There was no school, no hospital, no doctor, no medicine in the Kammu village. What shall the villagers do when someone falls ill or hurts himself? In a Kammu village there are a shaman and a medicine man one can turn to. A shaman is very important in the Kammu villages, because there are many different kinds of evil spirits in the Kammu land. When a spirit enters somebody, then a shaman can help him or her, and when someone falls ill, a medicine man can help him with plant medicine.

Three evil spirits are described below:

1. Róoy Rwàay Ɔ̀ɔk, tiger spirit.

People get this kind of spirit from having married the wrong way, which means that a man has married a girl in his own marriage group or from his wife-taker's group. The tiger spirit is very dangerous; many people have been killed by this spirit. It stays with the souls of the persons who have married the wrong way. When someone has got this spirit, he will fall ill, and we make a sacrifice with cooked rice, tobacco, fermented tea, and sometimes also with a water-buffalo, a pig, or a hen. Then someone who can say the prayers will take part in the ceremony, and he will drive away the spirit.

2. Róoy Rklàk, rklàk spirit.

People get this spirit from having married the wrong way, the same as with the tiger spirit, and people used to say

Rklàk màh táay;	rklàk spirit is the elder brother
rwàay màh hɛ́ɛm.	tiger spirit is the younger brother

Such an evil spirit stays with the souls of the persons who have married the wrong way.

When someone has got this spirit, he will feel pain in his knees. The spirit may eat the kettlegong or the water buffalo as well. This spirit is as dangerous as the tiger spirit. We make a sacrifice with a dried rodent, rice, fermented tea, tobacco, water from washing the rice, and bran. The ceremony should be made at nine or ten o'clock, because young men used to visit the young girls at this time. Thus this kind of spirit follows the young men going to visit the young girls, since they get this spirit from the wrong marriage. The persons who will send this spirit away will be one

person from the wife-giver side and one from the wife-taker side. The visits to the young girls, the marriage, and this kind of spirit are connected.

3. Róoy Èes, place spirit

The place spirit is the owner of the land, wild animals, water, and trees. Before a hunter goes to hunt or to make a trap, he must make a special ceremony in order to ask permission from the spirit of the place where he intends to hunt.

Illness, Chía lòok

Kammu people live on the mountain slopes, and the men work in the forest almost every day. When there is a taboo on a certain day, people may not work in their fields. Then they go to cut wood, seek wild vegetables, hunt in the forest, or go to fish in the river. In the forest there are many different kinds of mosquitoes. When people work in the fields, especially during the rainy season when they weed their fields, the mosquitoes come in swarms in the late afternoon and bite them. While people work in the fields or in the forest, it sometimes rains, and they get soaking wet. At other times it is very cold, but they do not have time to make a fire and warm themselves.

Under such circumstances people fall ill very easily, and there are three kinds of very dangerous illnesses, malaria, diarrhea, and pneumonia. The Kammu often get these kinds of illnesses. The Kammu call malaria srmà tryìs, "shivering fever." We know that people get malaria from mosquitoes biting them, but there is no way to prevent them from biting when you are in the forest or work in the fields.

Quite often people get diarrhea from drinking too much water. We called diarrhea lúh lùuy, "to have a hole in the stomach," or just cú lùuy, "to have a pain (or illness) in the stomach." Some people get pneumonia from getting wet and walking along wet and cold all day long in the forest. The Kammu call pneumonia cú páaŋ, "páaŋ illness."

Most Kammu people seem to fall ill and die after the sowing period and during the rainy season. This is probably because people are drinking too much water during the sowing period and then get diarrhea. During the sowing the weather is sometimes very hot and sometimes it is rainy. People get thirsty all the time and drink a lot of lukewarm water. The water is not boiled but has been warmed by the heat of the sun, and that is dangerous for the stomach. During the rainy season poeple fall ill of malaria and pneumonia, because during this period, people get wet from the continuous rain and mosquitoes bite them all the time.

In northern Southeast Asia leprosy is still a common illness. Quite often you see lepers begging along the roads and beside the streets in the cities. Leprosy is, however, not a problem in the Kammu villages. We have, of course, seen lepers in other places, but strange as it may seem, it does not seem as if the illness hits the Kammu. As far as I can remember, I have not seen any lepers in any of the many Kammu villages I have visited although I have seen many in Lao villages.

In the section "Children in Kammu Villages," I also explain about the dangers that children under three years of age encounter in the villages where there is no health service.

5. The Village Ceremony, Téeŋ kúŋ lii pàak kúŋ

We Kammu people make a sacrifice to feed our village spirits once a year and at the same time we also rebuild the ritual common-house, còoŋ lók, which is the home of

the spirits. There are two different periods of time which are suitable for making this ceremony.

One of these times is just after the sowing period, because after the sowing we need rain in order to let our rice grow well. We believe that if we make a ceremony to our village spirits, the spirits will help us and let the rain fall and thus allow us to live in peace.

The other suitable time is just before the harvest is going to start. In that case we wish to have a good harvest. We believe that if we make a ceremony to our village spirits in this period, then they will chase away the evil spirits; for instance, the spirits of accidents, róoɣ h'éep and the spirits of waste, róoɣ ɣáap.[14] If these harmful kinds of spirits are living among people or staying with some families in a village, everything will be lacking, and people in that village will starve.

Or sometimes the villagers are unlucky, cannot support themselves, or are unhappy, and many people fall ill because these kinds of spirits are staying in the village. If this is the case, we make a sacrifice to our village spirits, for our village spirits are good and may make all the villagers happy and let them have good lives.

When the suitable time has come, it is the priest, lkùun,[15] who decides to arrange a village ceremony. First he discusses with his family to see that everything is all right in his own family. There may, for instance, not be any taboo of any kind in the family. When the lkùun has conferred with his family, he calls all the family heads to come and discuss how they should make a ceremony and when it would be convenient for all the families. There must not be any strict taboo in the village; that means that nobody has died in the village, nor has any family had their fields struck by lightning.

When the respective heads of every family have come, the lkùun asks them, how and when it will be convenient for every family to make the village ceremony. He also asks the villagers if any family has a black pig and if anyone has a jar of rice wine. If there is no family which has a black pig, they must go and buy one in some other village. We use a black pig because we wish that our rice shall be good and black as that pig.

Once they have made the decision to perform the ceremony and everybody has agreed on the proper time, the village headman collects some money from the villagers to buy a black pig and some jars of rice wine. When he has got enough money for buying a black pig, one white and one brown hen, and some jars of rice wine, the lkùun gives the money to someone who will go and buy the animals and the wine.

Then the lkùun chooses a good and safe day to start collecting the material for the ritual common-house. In some villages this house is almost as big as an ordinary common-house. In other villages it is small and very low and is placed directly on the ground, not on stilts like an ordinary house.

The ritual common-house is a matter for the entire village and is common property. It also symbolizes the village, and when we rebuild it, we actually call it "to build a new village." In our generation this does not mean that the village has moved, but as is explained in the section on Rmcùəl Village, we know that the village has been moved several times. It seems likely that when a new village was built and the soil

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[14] Lindell et al, *Kammu Year*, pp. 68, 123. The rice seed mother drives out the spirits of waste from the seeds, háa smlà. When every family in the village has finished their harvest, they drive out the waste spirits, ɔ̀ɔc.

[15] Ibid., pp. 62-63, and for the hereditary office of lkùun see p. 6.

began to be used by people, the spirits of that area got this house to live in and became village spirits. The house is the home of the village spirits and even if it is not moved, it has to be kept in good repair. The procedure when it is rebuilt is similar to building a new family house, but here it concerns the entire village not just a single family. Therefore it is the ritual head of the village who leads the ceremony.

On the day when the lkùun starts to collect the materials for the common-house, he has to take care that the day is not on his own birthday, which comes every ten days according to the Kammu calendar. It should not be a Sii-Kéa day or a Sii-Séa day,[16] not the day when somebody from his family died. When a suitable day has been chosen, he starts to collect the material.

He gets up early in the morning about 5 o'clock, takes his jungle knife and goes to the forest. While he walks on the path, he listens for certain kinds of animals which may warn him by their sounds. Their sounds are omens which signify that something bad or good will happen in the near future. The strange warning sounds which he listens for are the sound from the white-crested laughing thrush, rèaŋ cɔ́ɔk, the bee-eater, pɛ́ɛt pòr, and the barking deer, púas.[17] If he hears one of these animals he must return home and give up what he had intended to do.

He then chooses another day and again goes to start to collect material as he did before. If he does not hear any warning sounds, he cuts down some 7 or 8 trhíl trees, and makes a bunch which he ties with a piece of liana, cmà prì, and carries the bunch of trees home and hides them under a bush outside the village.

After breakfast on the day when he starts to collect materials, all the villagers come and help each other cut trees and bamboo for making a new common-house. People bring their own food and water and they all eat together in the forest where they cut the wood.

When they have enough material, they wait for the next Sii-Rwèay day to come.[18] Before the Sii-Rwèay the villagers collect wild vegetables for themselves for use while there is a taboo for the new village ceremony. For three days after the village ceremony the villagers are not allowed to go to the forest, nor may they bring any kind of wild vegetables into a "new" village. In fact, one is not allowed to bring any kind of green thing into the village during these three days.

In my village we make the village ceremony on Sii-Rwèay days, but in some other villages they make this ceremony on Sii-Kót days. After breakfast on the Sii-Rwèay day, the young boys and girls bring food and their jungle knives and go to make bamboo beaters, kltɔ̀ɔŋ, in the forest. Some of the men tear down the old ritual common-house in order to rebuild it. In the meantime the women cook food for the workers. When they have torn down the old building and cleared the site, they build a new common-house in the same place.

Around five o'clock in the evening the young people who went to make the bamboo beaters return home playing the kltɔ̀ɔŋ all the way. When they arrive at the barns just outside the village, they stop there and sit down under the barns. There

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[16] Ibid., pp. 45-52. In the Kammu calendar the days and the years are counted and named by means of two series of cyclical words: first series (mìɨ or píi), second series (dɔ́ɔk mìɨ or dɔ́ɔk píi). Sii-Kéa is the day of the country, that is, the Kammu rural areas, and no work may be undertaken except making traps.

[17] Ibid., p. 63. Barking deer, white-crested thrushes, and bee-eaters are symbols of the ancestors. See also Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp.190 ff.

[18] For the sixty-day cycle and the significance of the various days, see Lindell et al., *Kammu Year*.

Fig. 3. Kammu young men playing bamboo beaters, klɪtɔ̀ɔŋ

Fig. 4. Kammu young men playing bamboo beaters, trà

they continue to play the klɔ̀ɔŋ waiting for the lkùun and the elder people in the village to come and meet them at the barns.

The lkùun and the elderly dress up with flowers and wrap white and red turbans around their heads. The lkùun carries a basket in a carrying sling made of cloth. They carry and play the long wooden-drum, prìiŋ, cymbals, créɛŋ, and knobbed gongs, mòoŋ, and go out to meet, to welcome the klɔ̀ɔŋ and bring them into the common-house, cɔ̀ɔŋ lók, which symbolizes the village. Some people who stay behind in the village prepare rice wine while they are waiting for them in the new cɔ̀ɔŋ lók there. When the group comes into the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók, they all begin to drink wine together.

Inviting the Àay Ràk Spirits, K'éay róoy àay ràk

At six o'clock the cáa who assists the lkùun makes eight cornets of banana leaves; he also takes eight candles, eight flowers and eight cups of wine. Five or six persons carry these objects and follow the cáa to the place where the àay ràk spirits live. When they arrive at the àay ràk place he kneels down and places the objects into the àay ràk house. Our village spirits' names are Àay Khám and Àay Déɛŋ.[19] He tells them to come and take part in the ceremony in the village. He says the following prayer:

Oh Àay Khám, and Àay Déɛŋ,
Today we let all of you
Come and take part
In the ceremonies
In the village,
And eat the sacrifice!
We offer it,
We feed you in the village!
We make a village ceremony,
We make a house ceremony,
We prepare our village common-house,
We prepare our house.
Come all of you
And take part in the sacrifice
In the village!

After they have invited the àay ràk, they return to the village, and when they arrive in the village, the cáa takes a brown hen and goes to sacrifice to the spirits of the village gates. He smears hen blood on all the three gates. There is one gate on a path leading to the north, one on a path leading to the south, and one on a path leading to the well where the villagers fetch water every day. When he has finished all the sacrifices, he returns to the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók.[20]

The lkùun kills the black pig and uses its blood and blood from hens to smear on the altars above the doors.

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[19] Cf. C. Archaimbault,"Religious Structures in Laos," *Journal of the Siam Society* 52 (1964): 67, n. 10 regarding Chao Ban, lord of the village.

[20] Cf. Boonchuai Srisawas, "The Muang Spirits of Muang La," *Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter* 1 (June 1988). pp. 2 ff.

After that they cook the pork. The pig's head is boiled and all the meat is carefully removed to prevent an evil smell, for they will keep the dry skull of the pig under the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók roof. When the food is ready, the lkùun takes some of it and some cooked rice and puts them on the altars to feed the village spirits. After the lkùun has offered the food to the spirits, the villagers come and eat the food together. Some of them eat; others just drink wine. On that night people eat and drink wine at the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók and also at the lkùun's house all through the night.

At the lkùun's house, the family kills a pig and a hen to strengthen their souls. They use the pork for food and make a sacrifice to their own house spirits, and people come to drink wine and eat at the lkùun's house as well.

Sacrifice to the Water Spirits, Téɛŋ róoy òm

The cermonies pertaining to the entire village are not finished when the ritual common-house has been built. The well from which the villagers draw water also has to be cleaned and rinsed out. Thus the rites result in a renewal of the facilities which are common to all the households of the village.

The next day is Sìi-Màŋ day, which is a normal day when every kind of work may be undertaken. The young men, young women, and children dress up using palm leaves, which they tie around their heads adding some flowers to make it look pretty. They all enjoy themselves, and everybody is very happy to take part in this ceremony.

They bring the wooden drum, prìiŋ, cymbals, créɛŋ, knobbed gongs, mòoŋ, and the bamboo beaters, kltɔ̀ɔŋ. While they walk towards the stream, they play these instruments all the way.

When they come to the stream where the well is, some of the young men clean the well, others make a bamboo decoration and erect it behind the well. After that they kill a white hen to make a sacrifice to the water-elephant spirits, róoy scáɛŋ, and dragon spirits, róoy pryɔ̀ɔŋ. White hens are used for the sacrifices to the spirits living in the water, such as the water-elephant spirits and the dragon spirits.

They also make a bamboo decoration for the water container, tón káh. Then they fetch the first water from the clean well and keep the water in that decorated water container. When the well has been properly cleaned and they have finished the sacrifice to the water-elephant, they begin to play their instruments and return home. The water container with the first water is placed in the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók.

The following day is a Síi-Plák day, and after breakfast every family brings a harvest basket, one from each house. They place their baskets under the water container, tóŋkáh, which is hung up in the cɔ̀ɔŋ lók. When every household has placed its basket under the tóŋkáh, the lkùun uses a crossbow and an arrow and shoots at the water container. Water pours out over the baskets. If the water pours out over one's basket, the owner of that basket will get a good harvest that year. On the other hand if the water does not reach a certain basket, the owner will be unfortunate and get a bad harvest.

After the lkùun has shot at the water container, men, women and children beat all the percussion instruments again and go to the river in order to "float the smlèɛŋ liana," yɔ̀h pcúur smlèɛŋ. Smlèɛŋ is a kind of bad spirit. On the Síi-Plák day they go to float the bad luck smlèɛŋ spirits down the river and to fish at the same time. They play the instruments in the procession from the village to the river, but when they come near the river they hide the instruments beside the path before they go and float the smlèɛŋ leaves in the water. When this is done, the smlèɛŋ spirits

come out from our bodies and follow the smlèɛŋ leaves. We do this because the dragon spirits do not like the smlèɛŋ, and if we do not get rid of the smlèɛŋ the dragon will perhaps come out of the water and eat us.

While floating the smlèɛŋ leaves the villagers say the following prayer:

Oh smlèɛŋ of the village,
Smlèɛŋ of the house,
Run away and follow a path,
Floating along the river.
Bad luck,
Go off, go out from our bodies,
Go away, follow this path,
Go off by this river

After having floated the smlèɛŋ leaves, they fish and play, throw mud at each other, and push one another into the water.[21]

When the sun is above their heads, that is, at noon, and everybody is getting tired and hungry, they look for a nice place, an open place. They stop there, and some of the men collect dry branches for making a fire, and the women pick wild vegetables at the riverbank. They roast the fish they have caught and make a pepper sauce. When the food is ready, men, women and children come and sit around the food and eat together.

After lunch they continue to fish until four or five o'clock. At that time they go back and fetch the instruments which they have hidden beside the path. Playing the instruments they start on the way home. When they arrive in the village, they go into the cɔ̀ɔŋ lɔ́k, and there they drink wine and have a nice time together all through the night.

On the next Sîi-Rwàay day, that is ten days after the cɔ̀ɔŋ lɔ́k was built, they put the roof on to complete the cɔ̀ɔŋ lɔ́k. They also have a second ceremony on that day, but it's not as big as the first one. After that, everyone may go to work in the fields again, but the village, which is now considered a new village, is still under taboo for certain kinds of work.

Taboos, Sŋcrî

1. No one is allowed to bring any kind of meat from an animal which has been killed by a tiger or died by itself, sŋsáak, for 60 days, after the cɔ̀ɔŋ lɔ́k has been built. Sŋsáak means leftover food or leftover meat, and that is a bad thing and causes bad luck. Therefore we never invite anybody to eat our leftover food. If anyone brings sŋsáak into their new village or new house, something bad would happen to some unfortunate person in the village.

2. Strangers are not allowed to enter the recently rebuilt village for ten days. Strangers mean bad luck, since they would scare away good luck. However, if a stranger would like to enter a recently built village all the same, then he or she has to pay for a chicken and a bottle of wine in order to ask permission from the village spirits.

3. It is forbidden to bring any kind of vegetables into the renewed village, because vegetables are of a green color. Green is considered strange, and strange

[21] See Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, p. 215.

colors mean bad luck, too. If someone brings any kind of fresh vegetables, sɲcɲáar "green things," into a recently built village, money, rice, good luck, and everything the villagers wish for would avoid their village.

4. One should never travel to a distant place at that particular time, for if anyone travels, the smlèɛŋ spirit will strike him, or a dragon may come out of the water and eat him.

5. One should never get married before the taboo is over, that is, for 60 days after the ceremony. This taboo is because both the recently rebuilt village and the new marriage have smlèɛŋ spirits. If one gets married before the taboo of the recently rebuilt house or village is over, the smlèɛŋ spirits will strike the new couple.

6. The Tèɛŋ Spirit, Róoy tèɛŋ

In the Yuan area most villages have àay ràk or róoy mìaŋ spirits which belong to a single village. As far as I know there are only three villages, Mòŋ Klàaŋ village, Séɛn Sréh village and Séɛn Tóŋ village, which have a common spirit, the tèɛŋ. The tèɛŋ spirit was worshipped at a special place outside the villages between Mòŋ Klàaŋ and Séɛn Sréh villages. Every three years all the villagers in the three villages collected money for buying rice wine and a water buffalo to kill for a ceremony to their tèɛŋ spirit.

On the Síi-Kót day all the Mòŋ Klàaŋ, Séɛn Tóŋ, and Séɛn Sréh villagers closed their villages and brought a water buffalo to the tèɛŋ place. They killed the buffalo and made food from the buffalo meat both for the people and for the tèɛŋ spirit to eat. All of the villagers—men, women, and children—went to take part in the very big ceremony. At the tèɛŋ place, they cleared the area and made three long huts and covered the roofs of the huts with banana leaves. Banana leaves do not keep very long, but the huts were used only during the ceremony.

I have never taken part in the ceremony, but I have been told that they drank rice wine and ate stew and meat salad made from that buffalo. People just ate and drank, singing and playing for the three days and three nights when they stayed in those huts. No strangers were allowed to enter the area or their villages during that period. Of course, the neighbors who lived around that area would certainly be allowed to come and take part in the ceremony, too, but then they had to join them from the very beginning.

Once, I do not remember which year it was, Séɛn Sréh, Séɛn Tóŋ and Mòŋ Klàaŋ made their ceremony to the tèɛŋ spirit as usual. When they had been preparing for the ceremony for some four or five days, the Rmɔ̀ɔn villagers went to visit the Nalèɛ village. On the way they passed the tèɛŋ place and thereby they broke a very strict taboo and the procedure was in vain. The Séɛn Sréh, Séɛn Tóŋ and Mòŋ Klàaŋ villagers followed the Rmɔ̀ɔn villagers back to their village and fined them. The Rmɔ̀ɔn villagers who had broken the taboo had to pay the entire cost of the ceremony.

7. Kammu Houses, Kàaŋ Kmmú

Every Kammu house has a fence around the open space underneath the house.[22] The fence is made of bamboo strips and goes from post to post in order to keep the

[22] For a comparison with northern Thai houses see Laurence C. Judd, *Chao Rai Thai: Dry Rice Farmers in Northern Thailand* (Bangkok: Suriyaban, 1977), pp. 91 ff.

pigs underneath the house. The house is raised up about 1.5 to 2 meters above the ground. The fence stretches from the ground up to the floor of the house. In the space between some of the house posts there is firewood neatly piled up from the ground to the floor. The house posts should made of hardwood, for instance, oak, khá, to prevent termites from eating the posts.

Some Kammu houses are built entirely of wood and thus have both a wooden floor and wooden walls. Even the roof may be made of wood. Other houses are built of bamboo with both walls and floors made of split bamboo. All bamboo houses have thatched roofs. The thatch is tied to long bamboo sticks which are placed in layers on the roof so that each new layer partly covers the lower one.

A good, big family house may have as much as 40 to 60 square yards of floor space. There is a porch at the front of the house. The porch can be reached only by the ladder-like stairs and one has to climb up to get into the house.

In our grandparents' generation, people still upheld a taboo against building wooden houses with walls, floors, and roofing all of wood. They said—in fact, even my own mother said—that if we built a house entirely of wood, we would become unhappy or become unable to support ourselves. This was because our ancestors would not like it if we changed their traditional houses, which were always made of bamboo.

There are two different times in the year which are suitable for building new houses or rebuilding old ones. One of these times is before the sowing, because at that time the rains have begun. At that time the trees set new leaves, and the grass has grown up and everything is lush and green. The trees and all kinds of plants are growing quickly, and all kinds of animals are happy because they have much food to eat in that period. We consider this a peaceful and lucky time. Therefore the family who owns the house will become good and lucky as well, and those who are going to live in it will have peace and good luck. They will be prosperous and well off, just as the grass and the trees are when the rain is falling.

The second suitable time for building houses is when the rice has set ears. This is also a lucky time, because people begin to see that their work has good effects. Many trees and plants have fruits, and therefore those who are going to live in the new house will have many children and their property will increase more and more.

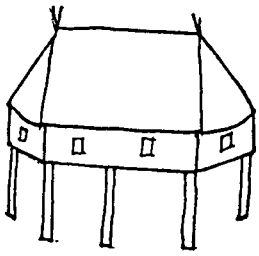

Fig. 5. A round house, káaŋ kóŋ

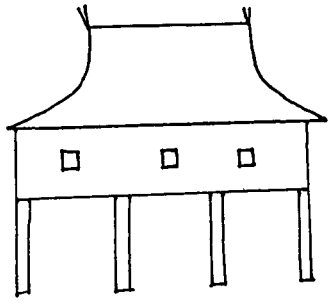

Fig. 6. A bent roof house, kàaŋ khɛ́ɛ

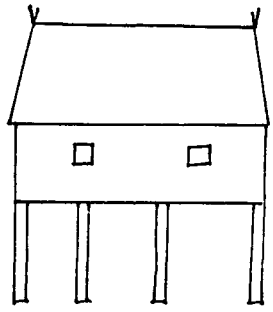

Fig. 7. A covered house, kàaŋ tàp

As is shown in figures 5, 6, and 7 there are three kinds of houses: round houses, houses with a bent roof, and so-called "covered houses."

To Build a New House, ə̀h kàəŋ hmmè

Usually when we are to build a new house we begin to collect materials in the hot season, mòŋ pnɔ́ɔŋ, that is, about the month of February; or, as we say, the third month, dî̃ən sáəm. The month of February is good for starting to collect the materials for building a new house, because the weather is warm and people have already driven out their bad luck. When people begin to clear their new fields, or after people have driven away their bad luck after finishing the harvest, the weather is hot. It is easy to cut trees in the forest during this part of the year, because there is not so much undergrowth as there will be when the rains set in. One or two months later, we usually build a new house before the sowing begins. That time is good for building a house as I have explained above.

Before we start to cut the trees and the bamboo for the new house, the father of the family, sometimes also the housewife, will choose a suitable day for beginning the work. He discusses this with his sons and daughters. He may say, "Our house is not good enough, we should build a new one. This year is a safe year, and all of us are well."

He carefully chooses a good day. The day may not be on his own birthday, sii nè. There are several kinds of work one may not undertake on one's own birthday. Thus, for instance, one may not get married or build a new house, nor may one plant any kind of plants. If a man plants something, he will become deaf. One may not make any kind of sacrifice nor may a man make any kind of trap. One may work but not be the leader of a work team.

The day may not be a Sî̃i-Káə day, nor may it be a Sî̃i-Sáə day. Actually, any kind of work may be undertaken on Sî̃i-Káə and Sî̃i-Sáə days, but one may not travel on these days. If a man travels on such days, he will get into trouble. This is because these days are days of visibility, and the evil spirits would be able to see him. It is not allowed to sell or kill any kind of domestic animals on these days either.

No work may ever begin on the day when the last death in the family occurred. We say that on such days "there is no day," páə àh mìi, or we may also say that "the day is dirty," cà mìi.

On the first day, when the man is to start collecting material for the new house, he gets up early in the morning about five or six o'clock. He takes his jungle knife and puts it into a sheath, khə́əp, and ties it around his waist. Then he goes to the forest, and while he walks on the path, he carefully observes and listens for certain omens, especially for the sound of barking deer, púəs.

If he hears a barking deer bark, it means that he must return home. He should not continue to collect any wood for the new house on that day. We think that the ancestors of the family pretend to be that animal. They have entered a barking deer and made it bark in order to warn the man to stop his work. If he continues to collect material for the new house on that day, the family who is to live in that house would become unhappy, become ill, or even die.

It would be better to listen to the ancestors, who have decided to warn you by the sounds of certain animals. Another one of these ominous animals is the white-crested laughing thrush, rèəŋ cɔ́ɔk. This kind of bird may be either positive or negative, depending on when, where, and how you hear it chatter. If it chatters in front of you, it heralds bad things. Then you have to return home immediately, since

the ancestors have seen what you are doing and know that something bad will strike you. If you hear it chatter on your right side, however, that means good luck.

Another bird we always listen for is the bee eater, péɛt pòr. The bee eater's chatter means that someone in the family of the person who hears it will fall ill, and they will therefore kill a water buffalo or a cow as a sacrifice to their ancestors.

All these animals are thus bad omens which should never be neglected.[23]

If he does not hear any strange sounds from any of these animals, the man who initiates the work of getting the building material cuts some five or six smaller trhɨ́l trees for the new house. He carries the bundle of the trhɨ́l trees home and hides it under a bush outside the village. From that day on men and young boys come and help the family to collect the wood and bamboo for the walls and the floor, and women and girls collect thatch for the roof. The help of several men and young boys is needed to collect the bigger and heavier logs.

When they have got all the material for the new house together, the leader of the work chooses a good and safe day to tear down the old house and build the new one. Sometimes they are able to build it in one and the same day, but often it is not finished until some days later. It depends on the workers, how many helpers there are, if the work will be finished in a single day.

After breakfast the father of the house informs the ancestors that they are now going to tear down the old house and rebuild it again. When he has told the ancestors properly, he tears down the dried skulls which are tied to the wall of the house. These are the skulls of buffaloes which they have killed for making sacrifices to their ancestors. He then goes to abandon the skulls outside the village.

After that the work begins, and both men and women in the village come to help the family. Women and girls move the family's property down to the common-house their family belongs to. The family moves to stay in the common-house until the new house is finished and they can move in again. When all the things have been moved away, the men and boys tear down the house. They also dig the ground under and around the house to make it even and smooth. While the men undertake this hard and dirty job, the women cook food for lunch.

On the day when they build the new house, every family brings some gifts for the owners. Thus each family will bring about five kilograms of uncooked rice, about one pound of tobacco, two to three kilograms of fermented tea, miang, and one or two jars of rice wine, pùuc ktáŋ. Every family who is going to rebuild their house will receive the same gifts. That is what we speak of as returning gifts to one another. If we give many things to other families when they rebuild their houses, we will receive many things as return gifts from other families.[24]

This is exactly like people who live in the cities paying for insurance. If we pay for expensive insurance for our home, then we will get more money for our house when something happens to it. In the villages life insurance and home insurance are paid in the form of sharing. What happens when someone in the village dies is that every family in the village will give gifts to help the unfortunate family.

When a family is going to give a party and entertain all the villagers and sometimes some people from neighboring villages as well, there will be many people. A single family cannot possibly provide food for so many people if they do not get any

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[23] For omens see also Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp. 190 ff.

[24] For traditional sharing see Tayanin and Lindell, *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village*, pp. 29 ff.

help from other families. Since there is no market in the village, people cannot buy food and wine to feed perhaps hundreds of people. Therefore they have to get help from their fellow villagers. The Kammu say:

Tàk	nàm	wèey	láay	tàa
fetch	water	keep	many	places
Màa	kháw	wèey	láay	hían.
cook	rice	keep	many	houses

This means that if you have many friends and many companions everywhere, whenever and wherever you go, you will have a place to stay and food to eat. You will never go hungry or thirsty.

On the day when the new house is going to be built, the men and boys get up early in the morning and bring their hoes and jungle knives along to help the family construct their house. The women also come to make the morning meal. While they eat their morning meal, the father of the house cooks an egg in a banana leaf. He eats the cooked egg with cooked black rice. He pours the water from the black rice at every house post. Black rice means safety, and therefore Kammu people use it in order to make the people who are going to live in the new house safe.

After they have eaten their morning meal they start to work, and men, women and children continue to work together all day long. When the house is almost ready, the boys put the thatch, which is bound to long strips of bamboo, on the roof.

The women prepare clay for making the fireplaces in the new house. The clay for the fireplaces should be prepared by the women, because women stay in the house more than men. They will therefore make it good and tight enough.

The father-in-law of the house arranges three stones as a trivet in the new fireplace. The family will use it for cooking rice every day for many years to come. The father-in-law is a most honored person and he makes the trivet, klàaŋ trkía̍l, for his son-in-law's family in order to make them happy and lucky in everything in the future.

It is the sons-in-law of the family who rebuilt their house who serve the rice wine to the helpers. When the father-in-law has a party, his sons-in-law always serve the wine and prepare food for the father-in-law's guests. The son-in-law has to take care how the jars of wine are placed and he has to observe how people behave. Now, for instance, he spreads a bamboo mat on the floor at the place where the family are to eat their meal every day, trnàŋ màh.[25] He seeks a flawless banana leaf and puts it on the bamboo mat where the food is served and puts the jars of rice wine on that banana leaf. Then he warns everybody who sits around him in the house that nobody is allowed to sneeze. When someone initiates something, it heralds bad luck if someone sneezes.

When the son-in-law is to begin to pour water into the jar of wine, he says the following prayers:

> Oh, now I will serve this jar of wine,
> Let everything be right as a crossbow,
> Let everything be suitable as an arrow.

[25] See figure m. in the following section "Parts of the House."

Women leave their underwear,
Men leave their loincloths.
Let it last long.
Let us use this wine all night.

The underwear and the loincloth mean good luck in connection with building a new house and beginning life in the new house. The family therefore brings them into the new house before all other things.

When he has finished the prayer, the son-in-law pours water into the jar of wine to mix the rice wine with water. Then he invites the elderly people to come and take part in the party.

When everybody has come, he gives each person two pieces of bamboo strips so that they can make a divination in order to find out their good luck.[26] Everybody holds two bamboo strips and a rattan straw for sucking wine from a jar. The round of wine has been prepared for them by diluting the strong brew with thirty-nine cups of water poured into the jar, pɛ̀ɛŋ thirty-nine, pɛ̀ɛŋ krwés.[27] While they drink the wine, they make a ceremony, kwés pùuc. Before we start to drink wine, we always inform the ancestors about the reason why we are drinking wine.

Then they hold the bamboo strips and dip them into the jar saying the following prayer:

Oh build this house, make this field,
Let us be able to live well, have a good life.
Let us be able to get long, flat pieces of silver.
Let us be able to get a buffalo with long horns.
Let us thrive and get more and more people in the family.
Let our house be full of people.
Let money fill our bags,
Let rice grow well in our fields.
Let rats get caught in our deadfall traps.

Then the son-in-law uses the bamboo strips they have dipped into the wine, and divines to find out whether the family will be living well in the new house or not.

When they have finished drinking the round of wine, pɛ̀ɛŋ 39, everybody who is sitting around the jars cheers three times, r'ɔ̀ɔŋ.

The owner of the house, the father of the house, now comes with some bird traps, some rat snares, a crossbow, and a carrying pole in order to buy the new house. These objects are the first among his property coming into the house since they are lucky symbols for a new house.

He carries these objects and stands at the bottom of the staircase. There he calls to ask the villagers who are sitting there waiting for him inside the house.

He says, "Whose house is this?"

The villagers answer, "Our house."

He asks, "May I have it?"

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[26] For divination with bamboo strips, see Tayanin and Lindell, *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village*, pp. 24 ff.

[27] Such ceremonies concerning wine-drinking, pɛ̀ɛŋ krwés, have different numbers of cups of water poured into the jar depending on the kind of ceremony.

They answer, "Yes."
Then they all say the following words:

> Oh let us be able to get silver in long pieces.
> Let us manage to get water buffaloes with long horns.
> The family should thrive and get more and more people.
> People thrive, be more and more as the tnhír trees.
> May we live well.
> Let us be healthy.
> Let us be safe,
> May we be healthy,
> May impurity peel off.
> May we be happy during the daytime,
> May we have a good dreams at night.
> May we get a hundred baskets of rice,
> May we get ten helpers.
> May we get wealth,
> Things from merchants,
> May wealth stick to us.
> May we be safe,
> The rice be good in the field,
> The rats be caught in the traps.[28]

When the ceremony of buying a new house, wèɛt kàaŋ, is over, the villagers help the family move their property into the new house. Then the father of the house climbs up into the house and stores away the objects he used for buying the new house. He keeps them in the loft. Then he sits together with his guests and drinks rice wine all night.

The New House Ceremony, Súu èem, súu khə́əy

The following morning, the wife-taking group brings a pig and one or two jars of rice wine. The son-in-law kills the pig and uses its blood to smear on the knees of all the members of the family who have a new house in order to strengthen their souls, and then he serves the rice wine. The wife-giving group in their turn kill a goat and use its blood to smear on the knees of their wife-takers.

For two or three nights people drink rice wine and play the kettlegongs, knobbed gongs, and the wooden drum and sing songs. They may well finish as much as twenty or thirty jars of rice wine.

Gifts for the New House, Pntràp èem, khə́əy

Both the wife-givers, èem, and the wife-takers, khə́əy, of the family which has built the new house will contribute to the house. The gifts are traditional, and it is important that the right group gives the right gift. Some four or five days after the house has been built, the wife-giving group begins to make the staircase, rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ

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[28] For a more sinister conversation between the master of ceremonies and a group of visitors see Archaimbault, "Religious Structures In Laos," p. 65 n. 4. "The King then rubbed a small ball of rice over his body, and, turning towards the aborigines, cried out, 'May the aborigines living in the mountains perish befere I do! May the aborigines living on the mountain-crests perish befere I do!' In chorus, the aborigines shouted, 'Yes!'"

tɨ́ɨŋ, for the wife-taker who has recently rebuilt his house. The rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ tɨ́ɨŋ must be made by men from the wife-giver's side in order to be lucky. It is also given in order to strengthen the wife-takers' souls, so that they will live in health in their new house.

The father-in-law makes the staircase for the wife-taker, because his daughter has married or will marry the son of that family. Thus his daughter will climb up into the house by that staircase; every day his daughter will use the staircase her own father made. If the father-in-law did not make it good enough, his daughter would fall down from the staircase when she climbs it.

The wife-taking group or the actual son-in-law must make the doors, prlòŋ or rŋpùŋ, the protruding decorations carved at the edge of the roof, cntrìŋ klɔ́, and the platforms. There is every reason for a presumptive son-in-law to do his best when he makes the doors. Before marriage he is probably going to visit his father-in-law's daughter at night. However, if he has made a bad door for his father-in-law's house, it will make a loud noise when he tries to sneak in to see his girlfriend. The noise will wake up the young girl's parents. Thus he will just have to go in and talk with her parents instead of meeting his girlfriend.

There is also every reason for the son-in-law to try to make the platform for his father-in-law good enough. It is not only that he makes it for his father-in-law, he makes it for himself, too. For instance, when his father-in-law kills a water-buffalo in order to make a sacrifice to his ancestors, the son-in-law has to use one of the

Fig. 8. A Kammu house in Thailand.

platforms. He will sit there when he is preparing food for his father-in-law's guests. Therefore he should make it convenient for himself.

A young unmarried man from the wife-takers would do his best to make five carved decorations protuding from the edges of the roof in order to show that he can make very beautiful things. Thereby he also shows kindness to his wife-givers, and his father-in-law may then allow him to marry one of his daughters.

Completing the New House, Pŋkòp kàaŋ

Some 25 to 30 days after they built the new house, people roof the house to complete it, except that the drying racks are still missing. On this day the father-in-law will bring his staircase and fix it in the proper place. The son-in-law will insert the door and get the platforms in their places and put the cntrìŋ klɔ́ decorations to the edges of the roof. In the evening the family, who can now live comfortably in their new house, kill a pig. They use its blood to smear on the staircase, pàak rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ, and use the pork to make stew for the guests. They now have a second party, and everybody drinks rice wine and eats the pork. Two or three months later they finally hang up the drying racks. As soon as the drying racks are in place the house is complete, and the ancestors enter and stay in that new house forever.

8. Parts of the Kammu House, Klúaŋ kàaŋ Kmmú

Most Kammu houses have only two rooms, a smaller room for the unmarried girls and a big room for the parents and the married persons in the family that includes the dining area, sleeping area, and the kitchen all in the same room, but of course there are many other different parts of a house.[29]

a) tìi pnmàh síaŋ	place where the pigs are fed
b) prlòŋ kntrùum	gate or entrance on ground level
c) tìi híc ŋɔ́	place where rice is pounded
d) rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ	staircase or ladder
e) sntrì	altar where the family feeds their ancestors
f) tìi tmlùy yàan yèm háan	place where the family hangs the kettlegong during funerals
g) tmprà kɔ́ɔn núm	fireplace in the room of unmarried girls
h) làas	platform
i) prlòŋ	a door
j) cɔ́ɔc	sleeping place close to the door
k) tmprà kɔ̀ɔŋ	fireplace where the family cooks food
l) pntràk	shelf
m) trnàŋ màh	place where the family eats
n) lìaŋ tál	lower end of the house
o) lìaŋ pàh	upper end of the house
p) sntrì	altar where the family feeds their ancestors
q) sntrì lìaŋ klúaŋ	altar inside the house where people feed their ancestors
r) rmlàaŋ	sleeping place for the house father and mother

[29] Cf. Richard B. Davis, *Muang Metaphysics. A Study of Northern Thai Myth and Ritual* (Bangkok: Pandora, 1984), pp. 43-51.

s) trnàŋ màh àh káan	place where the family eats when there is a ceremony
t) tmprà rùŋ	fireplace where the family cooks only rice
u) tìi tmlùy yàan yèm pháan tráak	place where the family hangs a kettlegong when there is a buffalo ceremony
v) pntràk lòok	shelf at the back of the house
w) trnàŋ màh yèm àh kòn háan	place where the family eats at a funeral
x) prlòŋ lòok	back door of the house
y) làas lìaŋ lòok	platform at the back
z) rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ lòok	ladder at the back

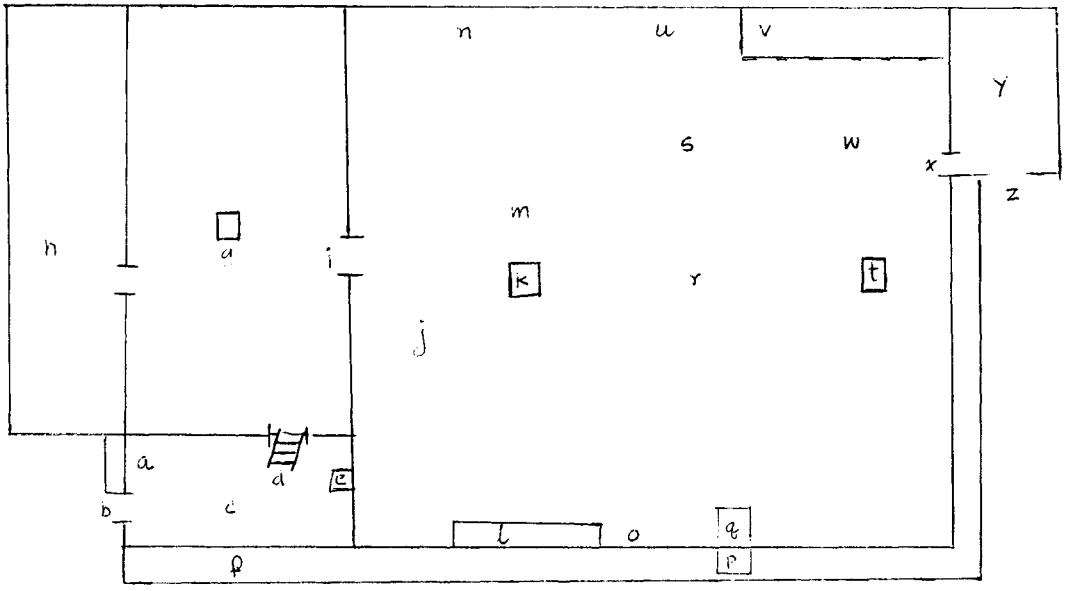

Fig. 9 Inside a Kammu house, klúaŋ kàaŋ Kmmú

9. The Village Headman and Priest, Nàay báan káp lkùun

In a Kammu village, there is a village headman, nàay báan, and a ritual head or priest, lkùun. The village headman is chosen from among the most respected heads of households, and he is generally elected for life or until he himself chooses to retire. Ideally he should be the person most respected by the other householders, and he usually is. He must also be the most perfectly honest person, and he should not only think of himself and his own family but of the welfare of the entire village. It depends on whether he is a good and honest man or not for how long he may be accepted as a village headman.

The village headman should feel responsibility for his villagers. Whether he is poor or rich does not really matter, the village headman is always the most important person in the village. The village headman represents the village in all contacts with the government. He must therefore be politically clever if he is going to serve his village well. When I was still living in Laos, most of the Kammu village headmen could not write or read in the Lao alphabet,[30] but like most adult Kammu men they could speak Lao fairly well.

The Village Priest, Lkùun

In a Kammu village there is a priest, lkùun. Whether it is a big or a small village, there is only one priest. The priest is not elected by the villagers as the village headman is. The priesthood is a hereditary office, inherited from generation to generation. The lkùun thus comes from the lkùun family, and the office will stay within the same family. When the lkùun dies, the eldest son must succeed his father, even if the son is only five years of age. A woman can never become a priest since the spirits then would not take part at the sacrifice. The Kammu people have never chosen a priest from any other family. We believe that the lkùun has a special relation to the village spirits, and if somebody else should try to make sacrifices to them, the spirits would not accept the sacrifices. One of the most important tasks of the lkùun is to hold the village ceremony described earlier.

10. Messages, Cláaŋ

A long time ago there was darkness. That there was darkness means that the Kammu people could not read, could not write; they were like a blind person who cannot see the world. There was also silence, which meant that the Kammu people who lived in the forest could not hear any news. There was no radio, of course, no newspapers, and there was no way to learn about the world.

In my home village Rmcùal and in other Kammu villages in northern Laos in the dark and silent times, people used a piece of wood as a means to send a message instead of letters. We could not read and were unable to write to each other. There was no school in the entire area. We could not see the country and could not see the world. We did not know what Laos looked like and had no idea about the rest of the world. We could not hear any news from far away.

People in those villages only saw the sun rise in the morning over one mountain and set in the evening behind another mountain. In the daytime people looked for the sun in the sky, and at night they looked to the moon, stars, and planets to know how

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[30] See also Donald P. Whitaker et al., *Laos: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: American University, 1979), p. 46.

time passed. They listened to hear which birds were singing, found out what sounds the squirrels made, and how active the cicadas were. These are all sounds which show what time of the year and what time of day it is for those who understand them. Only in this way did we know what time we should get up, when we should start a certain kind of work, and when we should return home. We knew what time it was from looking at the sun or the moon, and we knew what month it was from listening to certain kinds of animals. We knew when it was going to rain from the wind, the clouds, and the heat.

It was quiet in the Kammu villages. No real roads were going to or past our village, and there was not—and still is not—any railway anywhere in Laos. In most Kammu villages there was no market or shop of any kind. There was no post office and no mail was delivered. We had no radio, no newspapers, no telephone. Only rarely, such as when a group came home from a trading tour, did we get any news from the outside world.

When something happened in the village, we used the kettlegongs or long wooden drums or buffalo horns to signal to one another. We chose to use one of these instruments depending on what it was that had happened in the village. Everybody would understand what had happened when they heard the signal from the instruments. When we hear the kettlegong beaten very fast, for instance, it means that a villager has died. The sound of the long wooden drum beaten very fast means that the village is on fire. People recognize the sound of their own family's kettlegongs and they also recognize the various signals. In the West, it seems to me, a fast beat is joyful and merry, but to us a fast beat sounds worried and nervous, and therefore it is not difficult for us to understand that the two signals I have mentioned mean sorrow and disaster.

Most of our information we got by word of mouth. We simply told one another and in this way news went around to person after person.

You know, in that period the head of a district and the head of a subdistrict, any high officials still were all lowland Lao. The Kammu and Rmèet could not even be soldiers or policemen. No Kammu had ever yet been any nai kong, the head of a provincial district, nor tasaeng, the head of a subdistrict comprising several villages, administrative units between ban and muong. The Kammu villages had only one village headman, nàay báan, and one priest, lkùun.

When taphia (an older term for tasaeng) or tasaeng wanted something, for instance, when he needed some workers or wanted food from us, he sent a message by sending out a piece of bamboo with some notches cut out along the edge. Some dried peppers, some hen feathers, some thin strips of bamboo, and a thin string were put with it, the significance of which is explained below.

Then these things were bound together to a little bundle and handed over to the messengers who were on duty at the tasaeng's office and waiting to deliver messages. He also told them what he needed. If he needed some kind of food, rice and meat, he just told the messengers. He said something like this: "You bring this message to every village, and tell them to bring 200 kilos of rice and a water buffalo from every village. They should also send five workers to me here as soon as possible." Or sometimes the soldiers and policemen needed food and carriers to carry their shells and bullets. They then just had to ask tasaeng or taphia to send a message to every village.

The messengers brought the messages to every village. They might also bring a message only to the first village and tell the village headman to have it sent to the

next village, so it could go round in that subdistrict, tasaeng, area. You know, we went and waited in the county seat, the tasaeng village, four or five persons from every village. Every village must send people for sending messages or helping to transport other things. Thus, for instance, five persons from my village went and waited in the tasaeng village for three or four days. Then five persons from another village came there, and our villagers returned home. Each group had to wait there three or four days. Workers and carriers, rice and meat were never insufficent in the tasaeng's house. When he did not have enough food, he just requested more from every village. People from our village came and other villagers returned home to their village; villagers from one village came, and those from another villages returned home all the time.

During that period, the Kammu and Rmèet people had to work for tasaeng and taphia, but they never paid us. We only worked for them, without payment. We went and worked in their fields from the beginning to the end of the year, from the clearing of the fields to the harvest. We brought the rice home to store in their barns. We also fetched water, cooked rice and food, and it was we who pounded rice for tasaeng and taphia. Food, workers, and servants were never lacking in taphia's and tasaeng's houses.

The tasaeng for our village area was called Tasaeng Ban Mo. He was very rich, and his family had many water buffaloes and cows. His house was built of brick, and the roof was covered with corrugated iron. That was the best building in the area. Other people lived in bamboo and wood houses.

People from every village came and worked in his fields, pounded rice, fetched water, cut firewood for him. They did every kind of work, but they never got paid for it. We never got anything at all in return. People had to be respectful towards him, because if we did not respect him, we would be arrested. In fact, everybody feared him.

It was thus not a day of joy when the messenger came, because it always meant trouble and high costs. He or they gave the message to the villagers, and told them what they had been told by tasaeng. When the villagers had got the words from tasaeng, they must do what he wanted. One could not disobey the tasaeng's orders. Nobody dared to say NO!

As both Kammu and Lao people say:

Nii	phon,	bɔɔ	phon	faa;
run away from	rain	cannot	get over	sky
Nii	khaa	bɔɔ	phon	caw.
run away from	service	cannot	get over	lord

"You run away from the rain, but you can never get over the sky; you run away from service but can never escape from the lord."

If the message was urgent, the villagers had to bring it to the next village as quickly as they could, otherwise they would be in trouble. Even if it was raining, the messengers must use their rain hats and go all the same. If it was dark, the messengers must use torches, and they had to go even if it was very dangerous with tigers, snakes, and land leeches about. During the rainy season the river rises and floods the valleys, but they must cross it anyhow. One cannot disobey the tasaeng's orders.

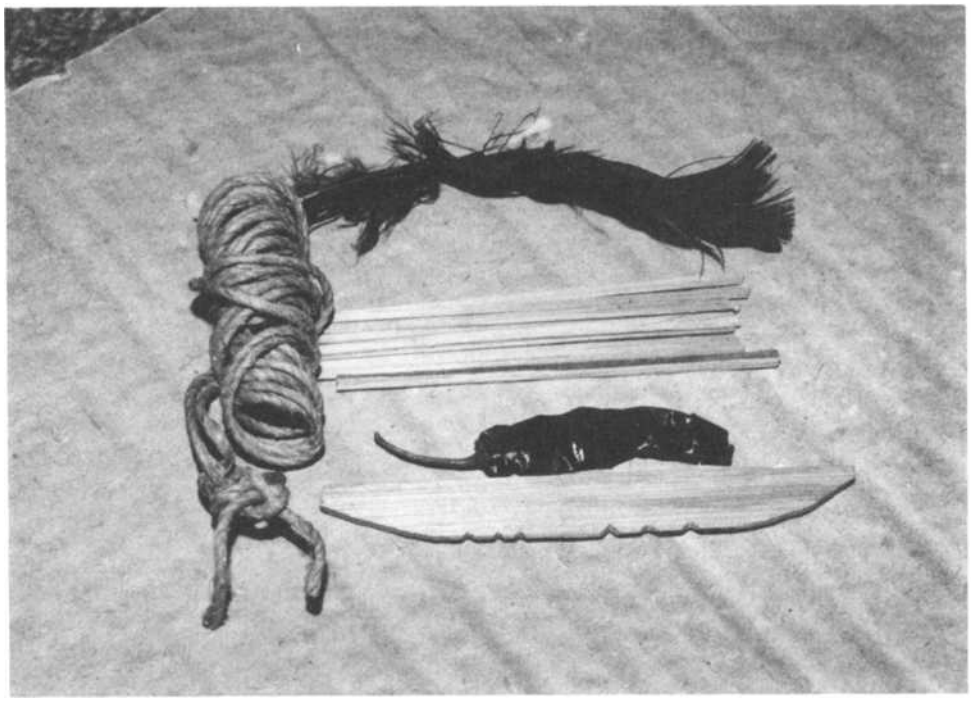

Fig. 10. Message, mèeɣ bák

I will describe how they made the bundle for the message and what the different things in it mean:

1) Perhaps they cut out a bamboo piece and made four notches at the edge. That meant one màn coin per notch. Màn is the French colonial coin. If there were four notches, you would be fined four màn coins, if you did not do as the tasaeng said. If the villagers sent the message too late or they did not bring the things which the tasaeng had asked for, he would fine them as many coins as there were notches.

2) They often used a dried pepper. Dried pepper means "in a hurry, hot." Then we must not keep the messenger in our village for long, or the one whom tasaeng wanted must hurry and go to meet tasaeng as soon as he could when he received this message.

3) They may add a thin string. The string signified a rope, which meant that the receiver would be bound and taken to prison if the villagers did not bring the tasaeng the things which he had asked for. In that case he would send someone to arrest the one who disobeyed.

4) They sometimes used some hen feathers. The hen feather meant that tasaeng would fine the receiver of the message. He would have to pay a hen and a bottle of rice wine apart from the four màn I mentioned above.

5) They also often used some dried bamboo strips. Those bamboo strips were put together to look like a torch. A torch in the bundle meant that the message had to go day and night. Even if it was dark, the messengers must use torches and bring it to the one tasaeng wanted.

When these things were ready, they were bound together and the bundle was handed over to the first messenger, who immediately set out on his way.

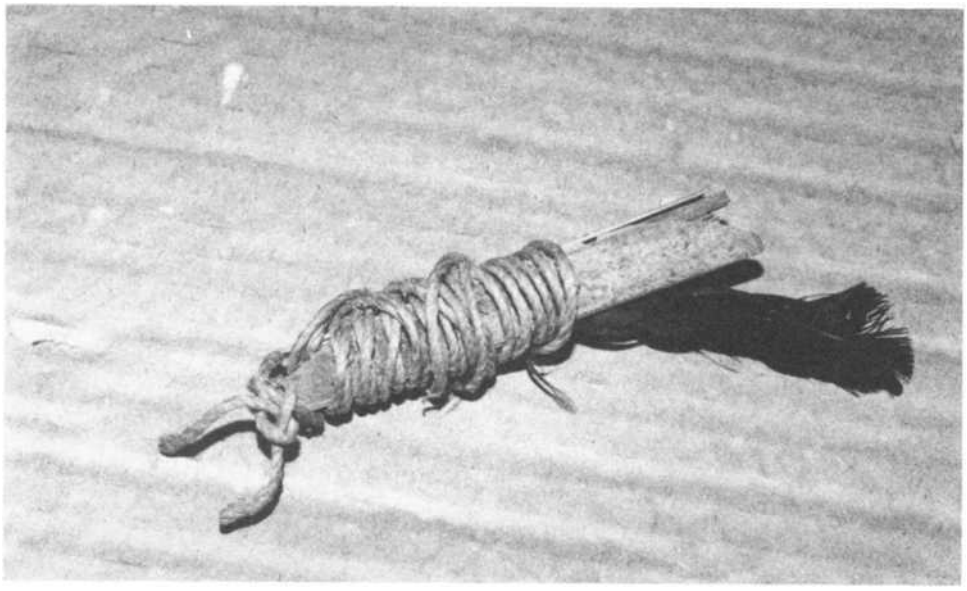

Fig 11. Message, mèey bák

11. Family Registration, Cót sámmanòo krùa

Many years ago, when I was between eight and ten years of age, people were in trouble over taxation. Everybody had to pay taxes, but people had no income at all. Earlier the tasaeng, the head of the subdistrict, required taxes. He called every village headmen to come, and he then registered the population. However, the village headmen hid some of their villagers, because they feared that the head of the county would take them either to be soldiers or to work for the tasaeng himself.

You know, at that time the people had to do corvée work in Luang Prabang. When the tasaeng told people to do such unpaid work, the villagers had to pay a salary to the one who had to leave his own work at home. The tasaeng did not pay the corvée workers; people in the village had to pay them or do their work for them in the village. If the villagers did not work for them, they would lose their means of making a living and have to starve. All the village headmen had to register their villagers, but they did not register all of them. In my village, for instance, there were thirty-five families. Our village headman registered only five families, and gave the number of our villagers as twenty-five persons, although in actual fact we had between one and two hundred persons. We had also no fewer than five rifles, but he registered only one of them. Domestic animals must also be counted and registered. He registered only one of our water buffaloes, but in fact we had many more than that.

The village headmen had to go and register the population every year. Some people who had died two or three years ago still had their names in the tasaeng's notebooks, and others who were still alive were registered as dead.

Once Ràw Lìaŋ followed our village headman when he went to register our population with tasaeng. Tasaeng took out his notebook and asked Ràw Lìaŋ, who was sitting beside the village headman, "What is your name?"

Ràw Lìaŋ turned his face to the village headman full of fear for he did not know what he should answer. He did not know whether he was registered or not, and it would hurt the village if he made a mistake.

"What is my name, Village Headman?" Ràw Lìaŋ asked his village headman.

Tasaeng was most surprised and said: "I can hardly believe it! How could anyone not even know his own name! Look at him, he does not even know his own name! You are, indeed, a very stupid man!"

Tasaeng probably did believe that the Kammu were very stupid since they did not even know their own names. Fortunately he forgot to ask the village headman about Ràw Lìaŋ's name.

Ràw Lìaŋ himself used to laugh when he told us this story. What actually happened was, of course, that Ràw Lìaŋ did not like to give a new name to tasaeng if perhaps he was not registered. They had to pay more taxes in the village if they had more people. Probably his name was not in the tasaeng's notebook. That is why Ràw Lìaŋ did not want to tell his name to the tasaeng, and he only hoped that the village headman remembered if he had registered him or not.

Later on, after the head of the county had noted down the number of the villagers, he called every village headman to come again, and now he required taxes. Fortunately the village headmen had not registered all of the villagers.

Tasaeng sent messengers to every village to tell all of them that everybody had to pay their taxes. People with water buffaloes should pay tax for them, and those who had rifles should pay tax for them too. We paid three màn silver coins per person—registered person that is, three màn per water buffalo, and three màn per rifle. Three silver coins was an enormous lot of money, and some people never managed to get as much as three màn together in their whole lives.

When the village headman collected the money from the villagers, most of them were unfriendly. They were quarrelling with him and quarrelling with one another. Everybody was angry, because they really did not have any money to pay. Some people had to borrow from other families; some had to sell their fields to get money for paying their taxes. There really were quite a few people who had to sell their fields to get money for paying their taxes, and a family which has no fields has nothing to live on.

Fortunately the village headmen had not registered all their villagers; therefore the village headmen were able to divide the cost of the taxes among everybody in the village. Now everyone in the village had to pay his share, not only those who had been registered. However, all villagers who were over fifteen years of age had to help with the payment, for as I said, it really was an awful lot of money. When finally the village headman had managed to get all the money the tasaeng required, he brought the money to tasaeng.

We would not have been so angry if we had ever got anything back for the money we had to pay. The money, however, just flowed out of the village. The money was not used for a school, for health service, for a road, or for anything that

could be of use and help to us and our children. We already paid with our work; now we had to pay money as well, but we never ever got anything in return.

Nobody out in the villages ever knew if it really was the government that required taxes. Perhaps it was, but if so, it certainly did not require that much money. We believed, and I still do believe, that sometimes the tasaeng just kept most or perhaps even all the money for himself.

12. The Names of Subdistricts and Villages, Cìɨ tasɛ́ɛŋ kɑ́p kúŋ

Here I present the names of the subdistricts and the villages in southern Namtha, for instance in the Pukha and Ban Mo areas. These subdistricts and the villages there were investigated in 1968. The investigation was done by the Lao government in order to prepare for the building of new schools.

The group undertaking the investigation needed local helpers, and I was selected because I already knew the entire area fairly well from several trading tours. Apart from that I also spoke not only Kammu and Lao but also Lɨɨ. I was also quite fluent in Rmèet (Lamet)[31] because I had lived in a Rmèet village not very far from my home village Rmcùal for several years in my early youth.

Needless to say the work interested me very much, and I did my very best to memorize everything which I heard and saw during that tour of hundreds of villages. As far as I know the findings of the investigation were never published, but I believe that the picture I have preserved in my memory is correct. However, after 1975 some villages in Pukha, Namfa, and Tafa subdistricts have moved to relocate in the valleys, for instance, along the road from Huai Sai to Namtha, and some villagers have moved to live in the United States and France.

Here I only mention the names of the villages which are situated near my home village. There were 117 Kammu villages in that area, 14 Lao Lum villages, 24 Rmeet (Lamet) villages, 5 Saamtaaw villages, 3 Lɨɨ (Tai) villages and 1 Hɔ́ɔ 'yàŋ village. All together there were 164 villages. There were also some Hmong, Mien, and Akha villages in the same area, but I do not really know which subdistricts they belonged to. Probably during that period the Hmong, Mien, and Akha in our area had no relations of any kind with the Lao government. At least I have never heard that the Hmong, Mien, and Akha did any corvée work for the Lao government as the Kammu and Rmeet had to do.

I have heard that now some of the Kammu villages have moved from the hillsides down to the valleys. For instance, the villages which were situated near the road leading from Huai Sai to Namtha[32] have moved and have been rebuilt along the road. However, in the area around Rmcùal, that is, the Ban Mo area, the villages have not moved. This is because there is no suitable valley for making wet fields. There are many valleys to be sure, but the slopes are very steep and the bottoms of those valleys are too narrow for making wet fields.

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[31] For the Rmèet see Karl Gustav Izikowitz, *Lamet Hill Peasants in French Indochina* (Göteborg: Etnografiska Museet, 1951). For the Rmèet language see Kristina Lindell, Jan-Olof Svantesson, and Damrong Tayanin, eds. "Two Dialects of the Rəmeet (Lamet) Language," in *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* No 4 (1978).

[32] See Map 1.

1. Tasaeng Knɨŋ Phɛɛt, 19 villages, all Kammu

1. Knɨŋphɛɛt village	Mòŋ Knɨ̀ŋ	Kammu
2. Knɨŋtaŋ village	Mòŋ Knɨ̀ŋ kúŋ Táŋ	Kammu
3. Rmcual village	Kúŋ Rmcùal	Kammu
4. Southern Srkap village	Srkáp kúŋ Tál	Kammu
5. Northern Srkap village	Srkáp kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
6. Middle Srkap village	Srkáp kúŋ Trtì	Kammu
7. Big Kɔɔn Slaay village	Kɔ́ɔn Sláay kúŋ Nám	Kammu
8. Small Kɔɔn Slaay village	Kɔ́ɔn Sláay kúŋ Nè	Kammu
9. Kɔɔn Slaay village	Kɔ́ɔn Sláay kúŋ Pìak	Kammu
10. Moŋ Kro village	Mòŋ Krò	Kammu
11. Southern Moŋ Sruan village	Mòŋ Srúan kúŋ Tál	Kammu
12. Northern Moŋ Sruan village	Mòŋ Srúan kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
13. Kɔɔn Hʌʌr village	Kɔ́ɔn Hʌ́ʌr	Kammu
14. Northern Rkɨŋ village	Rkɨ̀ŋ kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
15. Southern Rkɨŋ village	Rkɨ̀ŋ kúŋ Tál	Kammu
16. Nam Tiang village	Òm Tíaŋ	Kammu
17. Big Tcuum village	Tcúum kúŋ Nám	Kammu
18. Tooŋ Maaŋ village	Tòoŋ Máaŋ	Kammu
19. Ryaaŋ village	Ryáaŋ	Kammu

2. Tasaeng Stpuut, 11 villages, all Kammu

1. Stpuut village	Stpùut	Kammu
2. Sɛɛn Toŋ village	Séɛn Tóŋ	Kammu
3. Nam Laay	Òm Láay	Kammu
4. Northern village	Kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
5. Klar village	Kúŋ Klár	Kammu
6. Northern Moŋ Lɔɔt village	Mòŋ Lɔ́ɔt kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
7. Southern Moŋ Lɔɔt village	Mòŋ Lɔ́ɔt kúŋ Tál	Kammu
8. Middle Moŋ Lɔɔt village	Mòŋ Lɔ́ɔt kúŋ Trtì	Kammu
9. Kɔɔn Slaay village	Kɔ́ɔn Sláay	Kammu
10. Southern Kɔɔn Tis village	Kɔ́ɔn Tís kúŋ Tál	Kammu
11. Northern Kɔɔn Tis village	Kɔ́ɔn Tís kúŋ Pàh	Kammu

3. Tasaeng Naalɛɛ , 24 villages, 4 Lao and 20 Kammu villages

1. Naa Lɛɛ village	Naa Lɛɛ	Lao
2. Hun village	Ban Hun	Lao
3. Pian village	Ban Pian	Lao
4. Mok Praac village	Mòk Pràac	Kammu
5. Mok Cɔɔc village	Mòk Cɔ́ɔc	Kammu
6. Mok Rɔɔy village	Mòk Rɔ̀ɔy	Kammu
7. Mok Stooŋ village	Mòk Stóoŋ	Kammu
8. Nɔɔŋ village	Ban Nɔɔŋ	Lao
9. Kɔɔn Tru village	Kɔ́ɔn Trú	Kammu
10. Kɔɔn Plaaŋ village	Kɔ́ɔn Plàaŋ	Kammu
11. Lwa Wɛh village	Lwà Wèh	Kammu
12. Lwa Rpuum village	Lwà Rpùum	Kammu
13. Big Lwa village	Lwà kúŋ Nám	Kammu
14. Crkɛɛr village	Crkɛ́ɛr	Kammu

15. Krha village	Krhá	Kammu
16. Tooŋ Plaaŋ village	Tòoŋ Plàaŋ	Kammu
17. Northern Moŋ Klaaŋ village	Mòŋ Klàaŋ kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
18. Southern Moŋ Klaaŋ village	Mòŋ Klàaŋ kúŋ Tál	Kammu
19. Seen Sreh village	Séen Sréh	Kammu
20. Moŋ Rɔɔŋ village	Mòŋ Rɔ̀ɔŋ	Kammu
21. Tooŋ Ktaaŋ village	Tòoŋ Ktáaŋ	Kammu
22. Mok Kmtɨl village	Mòk Kmtɨ́l	Kammu
23. Mok Tuh village	Mòk Túh	Kammu
24. Tooŋ Mok village	Tòoŋ Mòk	Kammu

4. Tasaeng Tooŋ Plaaŋ, 11 villages, all Kammu

1. Tooŋ Plaaŋ village	Tòoŋ Plàaŋ	Kammu
2. Lampaaŋ village	Lampàaŋ	Kammu
3. Prtiir village	Prtíir	Kammu
4. Tooŋ Tru village	Tòoŋ Trú	Kammu
5. Tooŋ Rhaa̰ village	Tòoŋ Rháaŋ	Kammu
6. Northern Tko village	Tkó kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
7. Southern Tko village	Tkó kúŋ Tál	Kammu
8. Moŋ U village	Mòŋ Ù	Kammu
9. Rmpɛ village	Rmpɛ̀	Kammu
10. Moŋ Meŋ village	Mòŋ Mèŋ	Kammu
11. Tooŋ Trɔɔl village	Tòoŋ Trɔ́ɔl	Kammu

5. Tasaeng Ban Ɔɔm, 13 villages, 7 Lao and 6 Kammu villages

1. Ɔɔm village	Ban Ɔɔm	Lao
2. Waat village	Ban Waat	Lao
3. Phawii village	Ban Phawii	Lao
4. Nam Reeŋ village	Ban Nam Reeŋ	Lao
5. Northern Law village	Ban Law Nia	Lao
6. Southern Law village	Ban Law Teey	Lao
7. Haat Tɛ village	Ban Haat Tɛ	Lao
8. Pnhoon village	Pnhóon	Kammu
9. Puu Suuŋ village	Pùu Súuŋ	Kammu
10. Puu Kɔɔy village	Pùu Kɔ̀ɔy	Kammu
11. Cɔɔm Ploŋ village	Cɔ́ɔm Plóŋ	Kammu
12. Praŋ village	Ban Práŋ	Kammu
13. Moŋ Cri village	Mòŋ Crì	Kammu

6. Tasaeng Kɔɔn Tɨr, 8 villages, 7 Rmeet and 1 Lao village

1. Kɔɔn Tɨr village	Kɔ́ɔn Tɨ́r	Rmèet
2. North Kɔɔn Rya village	Kɔ́ɔn Ryà kúŋ Pàh	Rmèet
3. Southern Kɔɔn Rya village	Kɔ́ɔn Ryà kúŋ Tál	Rmèet
4. Tkláaŋ village	Tkláaŋ	Rmèet
5. Tlaaŋ village	Tláaŋ	Rmèet
6. Keeŋ village	Ban Keeŋ	Lao
7. R'aaŋ village	R'àaŋ	Rmèet
8. Skɔ village	Skɔ́	Rmèet

7. Tasaeng Tŋra, 11 villages, 4 Saamtaaw and 7 Kammu villages

1. Tŋra village	Tŋrà	Sáam Tàaw
2. Puŋ village	Ban Púŋ	Sáam Tàaw
3. Rɛ village	Ban Rɛ̀	Sáam Tàaw
4. Taw village	Ban Tàw	Sáam Tàaw
5. Mok Coŋ village	Mòk Còŋ	Kammu
6. Tooŋ Pɔɔc Pŋa village	Tòoŋ Pɔ̀ɔc Pŋá	Kammu
7. Tooŋ Ceeŋ village	Tòoŋ Cèeŋ	Kammu
8. Puu Waan Paaŋ Kwɛɛn village	Pùu Wáan Páaŋ Kwɛ̀ɛn	Kammu
9. Saŋ village	Ban Sáŋ	Kammu
10. Plaaŋ village	Kúŋ Plàaŋ	Kammu
11. Hmlaŋ Kaan village	Hmlàŋ Káan	Kammu

8. Tasaeng Puu Kaa,13 villages, 2 Saamtaaw, 1 Lɨɨ and 10 Kammu villages

1. Puu Kaa village	Pùu Kàa	Lɨɨ
2. Tiaw village	Ban Tìaw	Sáam Tàaw
3. Tɛɛ village	Ban Tɛ́ɛ	Sáam Tàaw
4. Tooŋ Pɔɔc village	Tòoŋ Pɔ̀ɔc	Kammu
5. Nam Sɨŋ village	Òm Sɨ́ŋ	Kammu
6. Puu Tii village	Pùu Tìi	Kammu
7. Rɨt village	Kúŋ Rɨ́t	Kammu
8. Mok Kha village	Mòk Khá	Kammu
9. Mok Pɔɔl village	Mòk Pɔ̀ɔl	Kammu
10. Ɔɔñ village	Ɔ̀ɔñ	Kammu
11. Kmprɛɛ village	Kmprɛ̀ɛ	Kammu
12. Kɔɔn Tlɔɔŋ village	Kɔ́ɔn Tlɔ̀ɔŋ	Kammu
13. Caaŋ Uŋ village	Càaŋ Ùŋ	Kammu

9. Tasaeng Namfaa, 23 villages, 1 Hɔɔ 'yaŋ, 1 Lɨɨ and 21 Kammu villages

1. Nam Faa village	Ban Nam Faa	Hɔ́ɔ 'yàŋ
2. Miaŋ Ŋan village	Miaŋ Ŋàn	Lɨɨ
3. Kntru village	Kntrù	Kammu
4. Rmɔɔn village	Rmɔ̀ɔn	Kammu
5. Prlec village	Prlèc	Kammu
6. Northern Moŋ Traañ village	Mòŋ Tráañ kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
7. Southern Moŋ Traañ village	Mòŋ Tráañ kúŋ Tál	Kammu
8. Big Kmpɔɔl village	Kmpɔ̀ɔl kúŋ Nám	Kammu
9. Kmpɔɔl Kuŋ Rnluh village	Kmpɔ̀ɔl kúŋ Rnlùh	Kammu
10. Southern Kmpɔɔl village	Kmpɔ̀ɔl kúŋ Tál	Kammu
11. Sklaaŋ village	Sklàaŋ	Kammu
12. Srkool village	Srkóol	Kammu
13. Northern Tooŋ Rhaaŋ village	Tòoŋ Rháaŋ kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
14. South Tooŋ Rhaaŋ village	Tòoŋ Rháaŋ kúŋ Tál	Kammu
15. Moŋ Kɨr village	Mòŋ Kɨ̀r	Kammu
16. Rmluŋ village	Rmlùŋ	Kammu
17. Northern Tlaŋ village	Tláŋ kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
18. Middle Tlaŋ village	Tláŋ kúŋ Trtì	Kammu
19. Southern Tlaŋ village	Tláŋ kúŋ Tál	Kammu

20. Mok Pɔɔc village	Mòk Pɔ̀ɔc	Kammu
21. Tnlə village	Tnlə̀	Kammu
22. Bigger Tnlò village	Tnlò kúŋ Nám	Kammu
23. Small Tnlò village	Tnlò kúŋ Nɛ	Kammu

10. Tasaeng Tluuy, all Rmèet

1. Big Tluuy village	Tlúuy kúŋ Nám	Rmèet
2. Small Tluuy village	Tlúuy kúŋ Nɛ̀	Rmèet
3. Big Stuur village	Stúur kúŋ Nám	Rmèet
4. Small Stuur village	Stúur kúŋ Nɛ̀	Rmèet
5. Hŋkoon village	Hŋkòon	Rmèet

11. Tasaeng Ban Mo,13 villages, 6 Lao and 7 Kammu villages

1. Mo village	Ban Mo	Lao
2. Ŋuan village	Ban Ŋuan	Lao
3. Puu Lom village	Pùu Lòm	Kammu
4. Moŋ Hʌʌr village	Mòŋ Hʌ́ʌr	Kammu
5. Hnwɨr village	Hnwɨ̀r	Kammu
6. North Caaŋ Hɛɛn village	Càaŋ Hɛ́ɛn kúŋ Pàh	Kammu
7. South Caaŋ Hɛɛn village	Càaŋ Hɛ́ɛn kúŋ Tál	Kammu
8. Kɔɔn Kham village	Kɔ́ɔn Kham	Lao
9. Slyaaŋ village	Slyàaŋ	Kammu
10. Raaŋ Ciiŋ village	Ràaŋ Ciiŋ	Kammu
11. Snuk village	Snuk	Lao
12. Nam Ŋɛɛt village	Nam Ŋɛ̀ɛt	Lao
13. Haat Naam village	Haat Naam	Lao

12. Tasaeng Taafaa, 11 villages, 1 Lɨɨ and 10 Rmeet villages

1. Taa Faa village	Taa Faa	Lɨɨ
2. Mok Chuk village	Mòk Chúk	Rmèet
3. Mok Kla village	Mòk Klà	Rmèet
4. Nam Tŋɔɔŋ village	Òm Tŋɔ̀ɔŋ	Rmèet
5. Puu Wɛɛ village	Pùu Wɛ̀ɛ	Rmèet
6. Puu Lan village	Pùu Là̀n	Rmèet
7. Puu Luaŋ village	Pùu Wɛ̀ɛ Lúaŋ	Rmèet
8. Rɔɔk Rɛɛt village	Rɔ̀ɔk Rɛ̀ɛt	Rmèet
9. Mok Sto village	Mòk Stó	Rmèet
10. Tɛɛn Tɔɔy village	Tɛ̀ɛn Tɔ̀ɔy	Rmèet
11. Mok Smo village	Mòk Smó	Rmèet

13. The Streams in the Area of Rmcùal Village, Cɨɨ òm tàa kúŋ Rmcùal

There are many small streams in the Rmcùal village area. People and animals have no difficulty in finding water for there are small streams everywhere. Streams are also most important for our orientation. Our paths run along the streams, and when we want to tell anyone where a thing is, we mention the name of the stream. We may say that we have heard a tiger growl near the waterfall in a certain stream or that there is fruit to pick between two streams.

For this reason people in the villages learn the names of the streams carefully, much the same way as people in a town learn the names of the streets. I myself can remember some 89 streams, but I believe that there are still more smaller streams than I can remember. There are no maps that show these small streams, and I have therefore drawn the map from memory.

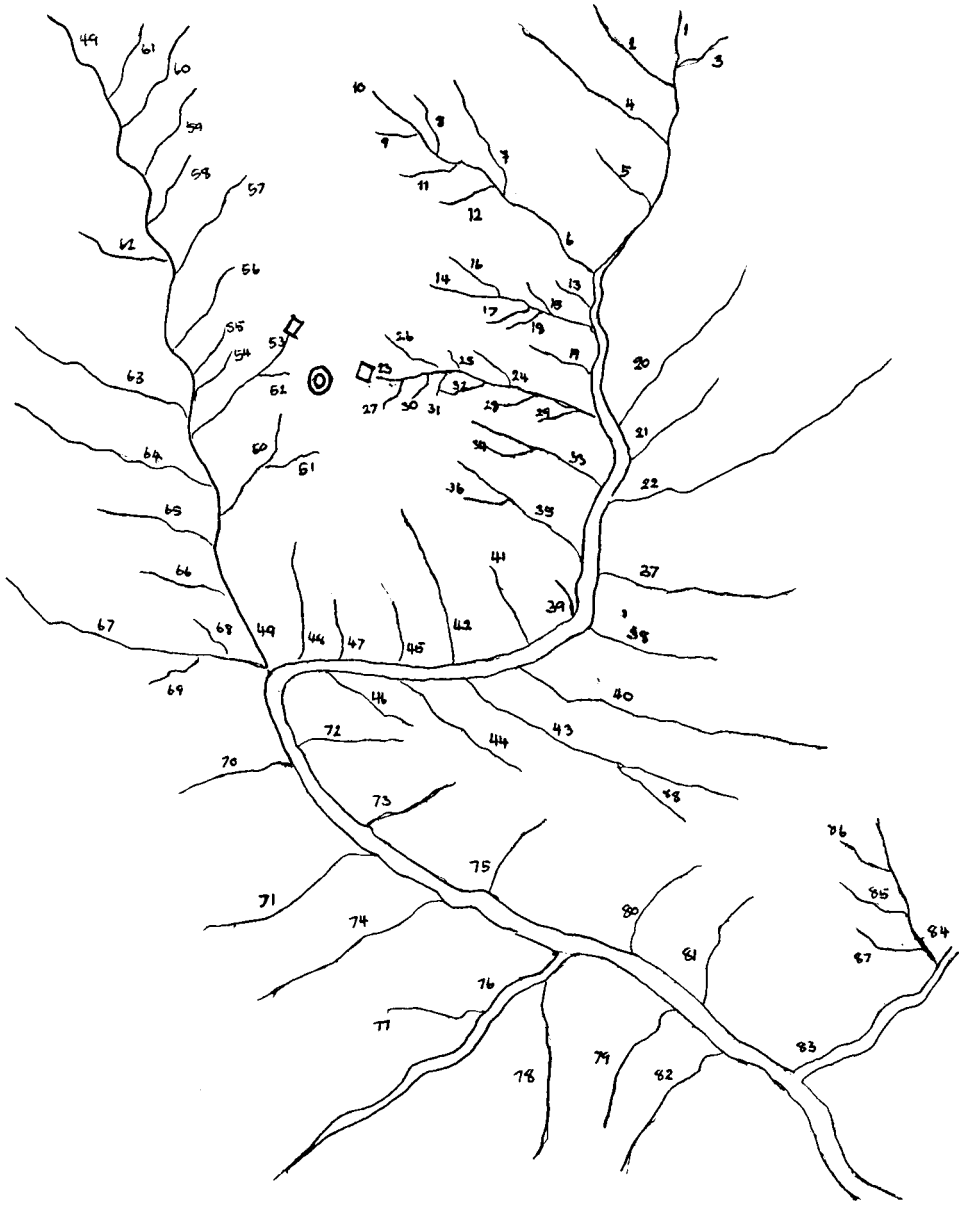
In Kammu the word òm means "water." The word is always placed in front of the name of rivers, streams and brooks. In my opinion only the Smpíar is big enough to be called river. Further down the Smpíar empties its water into the Namtha River. The Smpíar is not very deep and can be waded anywhere.

In order to show how we name our streams, I have translated the names where this is possible.

1. òm Smpíar	Smpiar river
2. òm Lùuy	Stomach stream
3. òm Prlà	Prla stream
4. òm Púus Púus	Puus Puus stream
5. òm Ɔɔp	Cave stream
6. òm Stɔ́ɔŋ	Iresine herb stream
7. òm Wàk Tmkúh	Precipice stream
8. òm Crì	Ficus stream
9. òm Klà	Elephant-grass stream
10. òm Pryàak	Pryaak-grass stream
11. óm Là̀ʌk	Lʌʌk stream
12. òm Rmlùŋ	Marsh stream
13. òm Prùul	Badger stream
14. òm L'èk	L'ek stream
15. òm Kcó	Kcó-tree stream
16. òm Krìal Príim	Krìal-bamboo stream
17. òm Kɔ́	Waiting stream
18. òm Pltìm	Pltim-tree stream
19. òm Krlèɛŋ	Bell stream
20. òm Rɔ̀ɔkmìaŋ	Rɔɔkmiang stream
21. òm Hmpíat	Hmpiat-liana stream
22. òm Prùŋ	Pouring out stream
23. òm Ɔh	Fetching water stream
24. òm Pìil	Piil stream
25. òm Sná	Win stream
26. òm Críin Crí	Taboo stream
27. òm Pàh	Northern stream
28. òm Pryɔ̀ɔŋ	Dragon stream
29. òm Háan Pàar	Paar died stream
30. òm Rmcùal	Rmcual stream
31. òm Wìiŋ	Winnow stream
32. òm Hrnùuc	Sting stream
33. òm Prkúul	Prkuul stream
34. òm Lpàŋ	Lpang stream
35. òm Rwàay	Tiger stream
36. òm Láay ès	Laay es stream
37. òm Hntrìaŋ	Hntriaŋ stream

38. òm Trɔ́ɔl	Trɔɔl-tree stream
39. òm Klàaŋ sáa	Quartz stream
40. òm Srtók pàh	Northern srtok-plant stream
41. òm Lrtè	Lrte stream
42. òm Wìiŋ	Wiiŋ stream
43. òm Cáay	Caay stream
44. òm Rɳcìaŋ	Rhubarb stream
45. òm Ráay	Raay stream
46. òm Krlùŋ	Puddle stream
47. òm Núŋ	Pond stream
48. òm Lmcá	Lmca-tree stream
49. òm Cùk	Ivory-palm stream
50. òm Crı́il	Gold stream
51. òm Pté	Earth stream
52. òm Srtók tál	Southern srtok-vegetable stream
53. òm Tráaŋ	Rhinoceros hornbill stream
54. Òm Kók	Olive stream
55. òm 'Wı́ak Cháaŋ	Macaque drink stream
56. òm Róoy	Spirit stream
57. òm Pòoŋ Pòoŋ	Pooŋ pooŋ-flower stream
58. òm Yà Càan	Grandmother Caan stream
59. òm Prhı́ar	Prhıar-tree stream
60. òm Rɳtìaŋ	Rɳtıaŋ stream
61. òm Pèŋ	Full moon stream
62. òm Klùŋ Còm	Mr. Com tumble stream
63. òm Prkàaŋ Wàak	Pile up worms stream
64. òm Húal	Bear stream
65. òm Kmpìar	Anteater stream
66. òm Crɔ́ɔŋ Màay	Maay scoops up stream
67. òm Prlèe	Prlee stream
68. òm Krɔ́ɔñ	Krɔɔñ-tree stream
69. òm Lwà	Cannonball-fruit stream
70. òm Màt Sı́im	Bird's eye stream
71. òm Túuk Túuk	Tuuk tuuk-tree stream
72. òm Tlàa pàh	Northern tlaa-bamboo stream
73. òm Klı́r	Klır-tree stream
74. òm Tàaylàk	Taaylak stream
75. òm Lìaŋ	Feeding stream
76. òm Crùul	Cruul-tree stream
77. òm Cnàŋ	Cnaŋ-liana stream
78. òm Sı́aŋ	Pig stream
79. òm Tɔ́ɔŋràŋ	Heat by sunshine stream
80. òm Só	Dog stream
81. òm Tlàa tál	Southern tlaa-bamboo stream
82. òm Pylòoy	Star stream
83. òm Rɔ̀ɔk Só	Rɔɔk's dog stream
84. òm Kràal	Hate stream
85. òm Plɔ̀ɔŋ	Rattan stream
86. òm Crı́ak	Shouting stream

87. òm Hmpùŋ — Hmpuŋ stream
88. òm Prkùur — Prkuur stream
89. òm Crmìl — Crmil stream



12. Map of the streams, phɛ́ɛnthii òm

14. Weather in the Area, Aɘkéɘt

In our book *The Kammu Year, Its Lore and Music* we have given a full description of the different seasons and the work undertaken at different times of the year. Therefore I will only draw the reader's attention to certain things that influence our daily life and make life very different, indeed, during the various seasons.

During the rainy season wild animals, both very dangerous and less dangerous ones, come out of the deep jungle to stay close to the villages and fields. They do that because when it is raining hard, the grass in the forest grows very high and dense. In some places it is completely impossible to walk through the forest. It is also most unpleasant to walk around in the forest during this period because there are land leeches almost everywhere. In places where it is rather cold, and in areas where the sambar deer and buffaloes sleep, there are many more land leeches than in other places.

People are very busy working on their fields. Nobody would like to walk around in the forest, because there are too many dangerous animals in the forest near the fields because of the heavy rain. The paths get very slippery when they are wet, and it is very difficult to walk up and down the hills. However, the Kammu people have broader feet than people in town and walk around barefoot, so that they can walk on the slippery paths more easily. During the rainy season people have enough vegetables in their fields. They need not go to seek vegetables in the forest; the only thing they need to look for in the forest is bamboo shoots.

During the hot season no rain falls at all. The ground is rather dry, and some kinds of bushes and grass are almost withered. The sky is clear, and the sun shines all day. The land leeches go underground when the weather is hot and dry, and the wild animals move far away from the villages and fields. One is now able to walk everywhere, even through the densest parts of the forest.

People often go to fish in the rivers, and hunters hunt in the forest. During the hot season people also have to go and seek wild vegetables, because the vegetables which they have planted in their fields wither and die from the intense heat. There are hundreds of different kinds of wild vegetables to collect and a great variety of mushrooms to pick in the forest.

When the cold season sets in, people have almost finished their work in the fields, and the harvest has been brought in. They then make a ceremony to start to use their new rice. They also bring their water buffaloes home to domesticate them and to mark the newborn calves.

It is not always hot in the tropics. High up in the mountains where the Kammu live, the temperature falls to a few degrees above freezing. The water in our rivers and streams never freezes.

Just after the harvest, it sometimes rains, and we say, "Rain to destroy the rice stubble." The rain is not so heavy, just a little rain with dew. The clouds start to come up from the Smpɨ́ar Valley at two o'clock in the morning, and it remains cloudy until two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

Once a strange thing happened during this period when not so many people went to work in the fields because the harvest was already finished. Only women went to collect their vegetables and other crops. The men stayed in the village and planned their travels which were soon to begin, and they only went out to fetch their domestic animals.

On such a cold and cloudy day, Mrs. Rìɨam went to harvest her millet in the field, which was on a mountain and ran down a very deep valley. In the valley there was a big and high stretch of jungle outside the field. Along the lower edge of the field Mrs. Rìɨam's family had planted a lot of yellow pumpkins, which bears, porcupines, and squirrels often came to eat.

One afternoon about four or five o'clock, Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and I took our rifles and went down to that valley in order to hunt the squirrels or the bears which came to eat the pumpkins. We went along another valley and walked carefully up towards the valley near Mrs Rìɨam's field. We walked and looked for squirrels and heard how some squirrels chattered. When we arrived in that valley, we heard a squirrel chattering on the trees.

Then suddenly we heard a strange sound "ìɨɨ, ìɨɨ, ìɨɨ." Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ turned his face to me. "Did you hear that?" he whispered to me.

"Yes, I heard it, too. But what sound could it be?" I whispered to him. We were very afraid, because that unknown sound scared us very much.

"It must be a bear," Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ said. "You know, when a bear has eaten too many pumpkins, then it gets a bad stomach and cannot walk away. Do you remember when Lady Wáaŋ Ràay beat a bear at the Cáay Stream? She killed it with her stick. That bear had eaten too many pumpkins and then got a bad stomach and could not walk."

We just stood there wondering what the sound could be. Some moments we felt happy that we would get a weak bear as easy as that. Some moments the whole thing was just frightening us.

"Could that be a ghost?" Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ whispered to me.

I felt my head become heavier and bigger until I felt that it was as big and round as a round basket.

"Then we must walk carefully," I said.

We were ready to shoot that bear. I walked in front of Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ, and our rifles were ready to fire. "ìɨɨ, ìɨɨ, ìɨɨ," the sound never stopped. We walked closer and closer. The sound was really terrifying.

Then I saw a woman's basket hanging on a branch of a fallen tree, and the sound seemed to come from under that basket, a long basket. But we could not see anything at all, since there was very dense, high grass and pumpkin plants growing all around it. We walked closer and closer; our rifles were ready to fire, and we pointed our rifles at that spot.

I heard that sound again and suddenly seemed to remember something. "Oh, but it sounds like a person," I whispered to Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ.

We were not at all sure, however. I bent down and looked through the bushes and the branches of the fallen tree. I saw something white that lay on the ground. I beckoned to Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and we looked through the bushes.

"It is a person," I whispered to him.

"But think about it first! Perhaps a tiger has taken somebody and eaten him there. That sound could be a tiger," Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ said.

We used our rifles and pushed aside the high grass and walked closer. Suddenly we saw that it was a woman. We ran to look at her.

Oh, it was Mà Rìɨam! Mà Rìɨam was harvesting her millet high up on her field above the valley. When she had cut all her millet, she felt frozen and wanted to kindle a fire so that she could smoke. In fact she was not able to sit down properly, because

she was frozen stiff. Then she rolled down the slope all the way to the bottom of the valley.

We lifted her up and I shouted in her ears, because it seemed as if she could not hear or say anything. "What has happened to you?" She just looked at us, without saying anything. We collected dry branches and made a big fire so that she could warm herself by the fire. We lifted her up and put her near the fire there. Her hands were as hard as iron, and she was cold as ice.

Then I said: "Wáəŋ, you go back and fetch people from her family in the village. I will watch over her here."

Wáəŋ Mɔ́ɔ went back to tell people in the village, and told her family to come and carry her home.

When she had warmed up, she opened her eyes and looked at the big fire with its light, red and warm. Then she turned her head and looked at me. She moved her hands slowly, felt her face with her hand, and wiped her eyes. "Oh is that you, Kàm?"

"Yes, what has happened to you, Mrs. Rìam?"

She told me: "Oh, Kàm, I harvested the millet. Then I felt cold and took out my tinderbox and started to make fire so that I could smoke. Unfortunately, I could not hold the tinderbox, because my hands were so stiff. I could not get up either. Then I did not know anything, and I was rolling down here."

The villagers soon came and carried her home. She had only hurt her face a little. Yet she had rolled down a rather long way, from the upper part of the field down to the lower edge of the field. She was then over sixty years old. You know, elderly people get frozen more easily than the young.

A few days later, she and her husband killed a pig and made stew from the pork for us. They also served a jar of rice wine to thank us for finding and helping her.

"If you had not found me, I would certainly have died. I was very lucky that you could find me and save my life," she said.

Mrs. Rìam came from my family's local lineage. The people of her family are our wife-taking group.

15. My Home Village, Rmcùal

History of Rmcùal Village, Páwàt kúŋ Rmcùal[33]

Apart from the place where Rmcùal Village is situated today, there are three different sites where we know that the village has been earlier. There is still a minor village in one of these places, Kúŋ Pàh, "Northern Village." People call it the Northern Village just because it is situated uphill from Rmcùal Village, which is the main village in that area. It is said that Rmcùal was built when the village where the villagers had been living before burned down. This happened in our grandfathers' generation, when our fathers were still small children.

I here say the Northern and Southern villages, which actually means uphill and downhill villages. Since Kammu say uphill, lìəŋ pàh, and downhill, lìəŋ tɑ̀l, right side, lìəŋ hɑ́m, and left side, lìəŋ we, more than north, south, east, and west. However, we do have words for north, south, east, and west; we use them when we speak of the country and the world.

There is another site which we call Kúŋ Tɑ́l, "Southern Village." In the Southern Village there were never more than three or four families, as far as we know. Later

[33] Rmcùal is no. 3 on the list of Təsaeng Knɨŋ Phɛɛt.

they all moved up to live with us in the main village. It must have been sometime during our great-grandfathers' generation that the people of Southern Village moved to live with us in Rmcùəl.

The third place where Rmcùəl was many years ago is the burial ground we still use. Even today one can see where the smithy with its furnace and place for the bellows was in the old days, and we still find flakes of rust and lumps of slag in the vicinity.

We believe that the present burial ground is the place where the village has been from time immemorial, or as we say, from the time when "the elephants were born and people were created."

Rmcùəl has three different alliance groups, as a village should have if the villagers are to marry mainly inside the village.[34] The different alliance groups belong to one of the different totem groups and have either a plant, a quadruped, or a bird as their totem.[35]

In my own local lineage we had 11 families.

All these families belonged to the fern totem, tá twá:

1. The family of Mán Ràw	tá twá	fern totem
2. The family of Kàm Hák	"	"
3. The familyof Hák Mán	"	"
4. The family of Mɨ́ɨn Ràw	"	"
5. The family of Càŋ[36]	"	"
6. The family of Mɔ́ɔ Lèɛl	"	"
7. The family of Pláw	"	"
8. The family of Pàŋ Pláw	"	"
9. The family of Sɨ́ɨp Cáə	"	"
10. The family of Tìaŋ Ràw	"	"
11. The family of Wáaŋ Kàm	"	"

In our wife-taking group there were 9 families.

All these families belong to the civet totem, tá tmɔ̀ɔŋ. Some of them have both wild boar and civet totems. The wild boar, tá sɨ́aŋ, is a secondary totem because a wild boar once saved the life of one of their ancestors. Another family has the water buffalo, tá tráak, for a secondary totem since in 1951 a water buffalo killed the father of the head of the family, Láa Càŋ. After the death of the father, the sons began to use the water buffalo for a totem. When a family has a second totem, this is marked in the lists:

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[34] For the marriage system, see Kristina Lindell, Rolf Samuelsson and Damrong Tayanin, "Kinship and Marriage in Northern Kammu Villages: The Kinship Model," in *Sociologus* 29, 1 (1979).

[35] Several totem tales are found in Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp. 127 ff.

[36] In a few cases I have forgotten the second name of the head of a family.

1. The family of Tìaŋ Síip	tá síaŋ+tmɔ̀ɔŋ	boar+civet
2. The family of Tìaŋ Nàaŋ	tá síaŋ+tmɔ̀ɔŋ	boar+civet
3. The family of Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ	tá tmɔ̀ɔŋ	civet
4. The family of Síi Thɔ́ɔy	"	"
5. The family of Tíin Tèɛn	"	"
6. The family of Pláw Sɔ́ɔn	"	"
7. The family of Síi Khám	"	"
8. The family of Càŋ Sáa	"	"
9. The family of Láa Càŋ	tá tráak+tmɔ̀ɔŋ	buffalo+civet

In our wife-giving group there were 11 families.

They have the forktail bird for a totem, tá céɛc. Some of the families have both tá céɛc and tá rìc totem tales, however, it was the munia bird, rìc, that caused the death of their ancestor, and in the totem tales of three other families, the death was caused by a cntrè-bird. Therefore these families have the additional totems of tá rìc and tá cntrè as marked on the list.

1. The family of Hák Ŋìa	tá céɛc + rìc totem	forktail + munia totem
2. The family of Làay Tɔ́ɔm	tá céɛc + rìc totem	forktail + munia totem
3. The family of Làaŋ Làay	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem
4. The family of Làay Ɔ̀ɔn	tá céɛc totem	forktail totem
5. The family of Ràw Kàm	tá céɛc totem	forktail totem
6. The family of Khám Làaŋ	tá céɛc totem	forktail totem
7. The family of Khám Káat	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem
8. The family of Tìaŋ Ŋàn	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem
9. The family of Ràw Khám	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem
10. The family of Kàm Súk	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem
11. The family of Khám Nàaŋ	tá céɛc + cntrè totem	forktail + cntrɛ totem

II

THE VILLAGE ECONOMY

16. Food Other Than Rice, Sə̀ŋ màh

In a Kammu village there is no market and one cannot buy rice or meat. There is nobody who sells food of any kind nor is there anyone who sells clothes. If you want to get a few vegetables or some fruit or want a little meat, pepper, salt, mían, or tobacco, you may ask for it from another family. People do not sell vegetables or any kind of small things to one another, but give these away for nothing. Also in case there is work to do, people assist each other and give mutual help without asking for payment.

The Kammu make swidden fields, and they fish and hunt. During good days people work in the fields, and during days when there is a taboo they go to seek wild vegetables, look for animals to get meat, or go fishing. One can never stop trying to find meat and fish, and the work in the fields may never cease. If one did not work all the time, there would be no rice in the barn and that would mean starvation. Should there be no meat or fish on the drying rack in the house, that, too, would mean that one has to go hungry.

In order that a family may live well there should always be some dry meat on the drying rack. There should also be uncooked rice in the house and also salt, pepper, and vegetables. Every house ought to have these basic provisions, and there may never be any lack of these things. Any day when there is no fresh food, one may take just rice with a piece of dried meat and eat it with pepper and salt. Kammu people used to express it like this: "Pick vegetables at the lower end of our field; pick up rodents in our deadfall traps."

Only two or three times a year do all the houses in the village collect money to buy a water buffalo or a cow to slaughter in a non-ceremonial way. This is always done just before the sowing begins and just before the harvest. The meat will be used during sowing and harvesting times when everybody is very busy and nobody can afford the time to go hunting or fishing. People are not only busy but there is also a taboo on slaughtering a water buffalo or a cow during the harvest and during the sowing period. On the other hand, a hen or a pig may be slaughtered for food, for there is no taboo against such small animals as hens and pigs.

During sowing time there are a few days when there is a thin rain that is crucial at this particular time. If you sow the rice too late or too early, it will not grow well. It should be sown exactly during these very few days. That is the reason why people are in such a hurry in this period.

At harvest time it is also most important to get the grain into the barns before the rain or the animals do any damage to it. Once the harvested rice is in the barns, it is safe.

17. The Kammu Calendar, Mìɨ kɛ́p pɨ́i Kmmú

The Kammu calendar is determined mainly by direct observation of astronomical and natural events as they occur.[1] The Kammu month (dɨ́an, or mòŋ) is lunar and begins on the new moon. Since the interval between two new moons is about 29.5 days, the Kammu month consists of either 29 or 30 days. The length of a certain month (i.e., 29 or 30 days) is determined by actual observation of the moon.

Usually a year (pɨ́i or mìm) has twelve months which are called:

1 Dɨ́an cíaŋ	7 Dɨ́an cét
2 Dɨ́an ñìi	8 Dɨ́an péɛt
3 Dɨ́an sɛ́am	9 Dɨ́an kɛ́w
4 Dɨ́an sɨ́i	10 Dɨ́an sɨ́p
5 Dɨ́an hɛ́a	11 Dɨ́an sɨ́p'èt
6 Dɨ́an rók	12 Dɨ́an sɨ́psɔ́ɔŋ

Since twelve lunar months are about eleven days shorter than a solar year, an extra month will have to be intercalated from time to time to make the calendar year follow the seasons properly. This extra month is placed after the third, fourth, or fifth month. The exact rules for intercalation, which perhaps differ from area to area, will be given below with a description of the natural phenomena which are expected to occur during the different months. These rules give a calendar which agrees with the seasons as we observe them. In the long run the correct number of months (i.e., about seven in nineteen years) will be intercalated, but it is not possible to predict exactly when a month will be intercalated in the future.

The Kammu calendar is thus based both on the lunar and the solar year, and the intercalation of months is regulated by direct observation of natural events. The first Kammu month roughly corresponds to December in the Western calendar.

Identification of the Months

The Kammu calendar is not written, but people keep and count it in their minds. People who pay attention to such things may recognize the month by the singing of certain birds and cicadas, by the plants sprouting or in flower, and by the working period, as shown below:

1. Dɨ́an cíaŋ: The weather is cold. The temperature falls almost to freezing in the villages. High up on the mountains hoarfrost is seen during cold winters.

2. Dɨ́an ñìi: The cold weather continues. The cold season, hrnìm, lasts during the cíaŋ and ñìi months when no major work is done in the field. Villagers must strengthen their vital essence to remove bad luck.

3. Dɨ́an sɛ́am: The weather begins to become warm. The white-eyed bird sings. The felling of smaller trees and the lopping of branches of bigger trees in the new fields begins and will continue for about two months.

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[1] For a more comprehensive study of the Kammu calendar, see Lindell, Lundström, Svantesson, and Tayanin, *The Kammu Year*.

4. Dîan sîi: The weather is beginning to become hot. The yèer cicada is heard. When this kind of cicada is first heard, it is tabooed three times. If it is heard on Sîi-Plák, that day and the following two Sîi-Plák are tabooed. Usually thunder is heard for the first time during this month. Thunder is tabooed on the first day and on the following day of the same name.

5. Dîan háa: The weather is extremely hot, dry, and windy, and certain trees shed their leaves. The calls of the àar and the seswèes cicadas are heard in the afternoons. The fields are burned.

6. Dîan rók: The first rains fall, and the trees come into leaf again. The clél cicada is heard at noon and the noisy prwèew in the evening. The rice is sown.

7. Dîan cét: This month is rather like the preceding month.

8. Dîan péet: People call for the rain and the rice to come, héet lwèŋ. The clél and prwèew cicadas are heard in the evenings, but the seswèes is not heard anymore.

9. Dîan káw: People speak in praise of the rice to come, cw'àw lʌʌ ŋɔ́. The yèlyèl cicada is heard calling.

10. Dîan sîp: The sound of the pɔ́h, bamboo clappers, is heard from the fields. The krwàaŋ and ìilèk cicadas are heard during the day.

11. Dîan sîp'èt: The rain falls continuously and the rivers are brimming.

12. Dîan sîpsɔ́ɔŋ: Rain ceases to fall and the harvest begins.

There is a mnemonic rigmarole listing the more important months and their characteristics:

Dîan sáam, yàam ñèe, - call white-eyed bird

Dîan sîi, cìirìi ck'ràk, - (describes dead silence)

Dîan háa, yàam seswèes prées s'ɔ́ɔŋ, - call seswèes leafless tree

Dîan péet, héet lwèŋ, - call for rain to fall and rice to come

Dîan káw, cw'àw lʌʌ ŋɔ́, - loud praise rice

Dîan sîp, kplìp kŋlèeŋ, - (describes a great din)

Dîan sîp'èt, klàŋ ñèk ñèk, - (describes heavy rainfall)
pék plèm plèm - flood (describes inundation)

Dîan sîpsɔ́ɔŋ, háan wàak, páak pté, - die worms crack soil

Translation:

Third month, the white-eyed bird calls;
Fourth month, everything is quiet and noiseless;
Fifth month, the seswèɛs cicada calls, the trees are leafless;
Eighth month, people call for the rain to fall and the rice to come;
Ninth month, people speak aloud in praise of the rice;
Tenth month, there is a great din from clappers and shouts;
Eleventh month, the rain falls in torrents and the streams are filled;
Twelfth month, the worms die and the soil cracks.

Some years an extra month is introduced after the third, fourth, or fifth month to ensure that the year agrees with the seasons. This is regarded as doubling the month. Which month is to be doubled is decided by certain occurrences in nature.

If the white-eyed bird does not begin to sing during the third month, then the past month will be regarded as sáəm nɔ̀ɔy, "little third," and the new month is then sáəm ñéey, "big third." If on the other hand the bird has begun to sing and the weather has changed properly, there will be but one third month that year.

The fourth month is judged from the appearance of yèɛr cicadas and the advent of thunder. If these are not heard at the expected time, the month will be doubled.

The fifth month, finally, is judged from the shed leaves and the àar and seswèɛs cicadas. It is most unlikely that the fourth or fifth month is out of step with the season if a ñéey month has been intercalated already.

Division of the Day

The whole of the area where the Kammu are known to live is within the tropical zone, and the length of day and night varies only slightly over a year. Solstices, equinoxes, and the times when the sun is at the zenith pass almost unnoticed, but the changes between light and darkness are all the more dramatic. The sun both rises and sets practically vertically all through the year, and the shift from darkness to full daylight and vice versa is rather abrupt with twilight lasting only a few minutes.

The Kammu use no clocks, and few people can afford a watch. There are no sundials, clepsydras, hourglasses, or other devices to keep track of time. The division of the day is therefore fluid. Nonetheless it is important, because the rules and taboos attached to different times of day to some extent regulate the work. During the periods called sŋáay kéɛ and sŋáay kéɛ lúaŋ, that is, approximately from eight to eleven o'clock a.m., one should never go near a lake or a pool. Dragons and water-elephant spirits make their abode in such places, and they may get out of the water to bask in the sun at this particular time of day. It is especially dangerous for pregnant women to break this taboo, and as they are much coveted by dragons, they had better never to go near a pool at any time of day.

Rice intended for ordinary meals should not be pounded at this time of day. When one is preparing for a sacrificial meal, however, it is precisely in this otherwise tabooed period that the rice is pounded.

During the stáan màtprì and kmpóŋ cmkó, that is, the hours before sunset, men should not undertake any work in the house. This is the time when the spirits of the ancestors come to visit their former house. If a man—especially the head of the local lineage, who is in charge of sacrifices to the ancestors—is found working in the

house, the spirits may get the impression that a sacrificial meal is being prepared for them.

Animals for ordinary meals are slaughtered before noon, but the time before darkness falls, when men do not usually work in the house, is the proper time to kill a buffalo for a sacrificial meal. Thus work for sacrificial purposes is undertaken at times of day when similar work for ordinary purposes is tabooed.

The Sixty-Day Cycle

In the Kammu calendar the days and years are counted and named by means of two series of "cyclical words":

First series (mìɨ or píɪ)	Second series (dɔ́ɔk mìɨ or dɔ́ɔk píɪ)
1. Káap	1. Cáa
2. Dáp (ràp)	2. Plɔ́ɔ (pláw)
3. Rwàay	3. Ñìɪ
4. Màŋ	4. Mɔ́ɔ (Máw)
5. Plák	5. Síɪ
6. Kát	6. Sáa
7. Kót	7. Sŋáa
8. Rùaŋ	8. Mòt
9. Tɔ́ɔ (táw)	9. Sén (Sán)
10. Káa	10. Ràw
	11. Sát (Sét)
	12. Kàa

The days and years are numbered successively by means of combinations of one word from the first and one word from the second series. A cycle of sixty terms is thus obtained. When we write these terms down and number them, we have to start somewhere, and make one of the terms the first one. The Kammu, however, do not consider the cycle to have any beginning or end, and they do not number the terms. Our choice of Káap-Cáa as the first one is completely arbitrary from the Kammu point of view.

To remember all the sixty combinations of these two series is a feat of memory of which rather few people are capable. Most people do not memorize the second series at all. The first series, on the other hand, is known to everyone, and with the prefix Síɪ- attached to each term they function as names of the days of the ten-day week:

1. Síɪ-Káap	6. Síɪ-Kát
2. Síɪ-Dáp	7. Síɪ-Kót
3. Síɪ-Rwàay	8. Síɪ-Rùaŋ
4. Síɪ-Màŋ	9. Síɪ-Tɔ́ɔ
5. Síɪ-Plák	10. Síɪ-Káa

The week is called Síɪ-Káa, which could perhaps indicate that Káa is felt to be the beginning of the series.

Contrary to the months, the days cannot be recognized by the aid of some specific kinds of animals or plants. A person may have forgotten which day it is, in

which case he has to ask some other villager in order to confirm whether it is a good or bad day. If he or she goes to work without knowing the name of the day, he may be fined by the village headman or even die.[2]

Just as the Chinese keep track of the terms of their corresponding cycle by "seeing" the characters written between the joints of their fingers, the Kammu count them on the joints and the tops of their fingers. The diagram below shows a picture from a Chinese calendar in use at present and a picture of a hand with the Kammu terms overlaid:

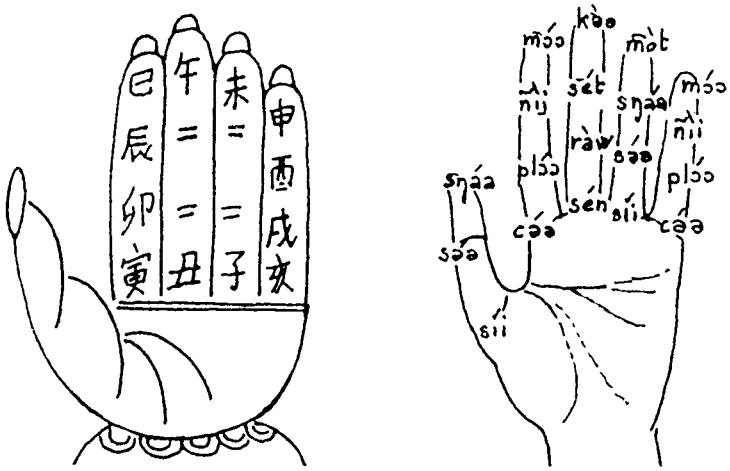

Fig. 13. Counting the Days, nàp dɔ́ɔk mìi

Good and Bad Days.

It is the twelve dɔ́ɔk mìi terms rather than the ten mìi terms that are of importance in prognosticating the success or failure of an undertaking on a particular day. A specific significance is attached to each dɔ́ɔk mìi, and the suitability of the day to undertake a certain kind of work is judged in relation to this. It is in the nature of prognostication that there are no hard and fast rules involved. The proscriptions serve as guidelines, but in the end one has to resort to one's own judgment.

1. Cə́ə: *Day of things female, of beginning*
Cə́ə is good for all kinds of work except for things that should come to an end or go away.

2. Plɔ́ɔ: *Day of emptiness and vacancy*
Plɔ́ɔ is not suited for beginning work in the fields or for harvest, as the result should be empty husks and thus empty baskets and barns. A house should not be built on Plɔ́ɔ, as it would remain empty. On the contrary Plɔ́ɔ is good for trapmaking. That a trap is "empty" means that the trigger has moved.

[2] Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp. 202, 213.

3. Ñìi: *Day of fear and respect*
Ñìi is good for most kinds of work. No traps are made on Ñìi, however, as animals would fear the traps and not go into them. On the other hand the day is suited for making scarecrows and clappers for scaring animals away. For Tɔ́ɔ-Ñìi see the section on Wáaŋ below.

4. Mɔ́ɔ: *Day of pots*
Every kind of work may be undertaken. Especially work with traps will be successful, as the pots will be filled with meat.

5. Sîi: *Day of security and quietude*
Sîi is suited for beginning work in the fields or the harvest. If such work is initiated on Sîi, the evil spirits will stay away from the field. The day is ill-suited for making traps, as the animals will stay away from them and not get caught.

6. Sáə: *Day of things obvious, big, and cursed*
Sáə is unsuited for almost all kinds of work but good for trap-making and hunting. On Sáə days the master and mistress of the house should not raise their hands above shoulder height on any account, not even to wash their hair. Sacrifices to the spirits of the dead are put on a shelf high up on the wall, and should these two people who are in charge of the sacrifices raise their hands, the spirits may perceive of it as a promise of sacrificial food.

7. Sŋáə *Day of blood*
Sŋáə is excellent for making traps and for hunting, as the trap or rifle will taste the blood of the prey. The day is ill-suited for building houses. When a person is seriously ill, a buffalo is sacrificed to strengthen his soul, and some blood is smeared on different parts of the house. If the house were built on Sŋáə, it would require the taste of buffalo blood very often. It is possible to arrange a wedding on Sŋáə, and it is suitable to kill a buffalo to cure an ill person.

8. Mòt *Day of ants and termites, of coming to an end*
Mòt is good for making traps, as there will be plenty of prey for the ants to take part of. It is good to burn a field as all the waste will burn off completely and leave a good layer of fertile ashes. On the other hand, one should not begin to harvest or coat parts of the rice barn with blood. If this is done, the rice will be finished prematurely.

9. Sén *Day of long lasting*
Sén is excellent for beginning the harvest, as the rice will then last for a long time. It is unsuitable for travel, as it would take too long a time to reach one's destination. Should somebody fall ill on Sén, his illness will last for a long time.

10. Ràw — *An ordinary day*
Any work may be undertaken.

11. Sát — *Day of animals*
Any work may be undertaken.

12. Kàə — *Day of ending, of passing by*
Kàə is well suited for coating the kneecaps with blood in order to drive away bad luck. If this rite is performed on Kàə, bad luck will come to an end and pass away for a long time.

Only two of the mìi designations have similar general significance. Perhaps the significance of the other mìi has been forgotten. It seems, however, more likely that these two are more recent additions. With the exception of Rwàəy and Káə there are no restrictions as to the work that may be undertaken:

3. Síi-Rwàəy — *Day of the village*
Rwàəy is not suited for work either in the rice fields or in the gardens for pepper, tobacco, and tea. One should not build a house on that day. Wine may not be prepared, nor may a party be given. Domestic animals may not be sold outside the village, nor may they be slaughtered, because they belong to the spirit of the village. On the other hand, it is allowed to fish, make traps, and hunt. In years when sacrifices to the spirit of the village are offered, the rites are undertaken on Rwàəy.

10. Síi-Káə — *Day of the country* (rural areas)
No kind of work may be undertaken except the making of traps. It is important that no domestic animals are sold outside the village. This taboo on selling animals is especially strong on Káə-Sáə days.

It should be noted that it is only the initiation of work that is prohibited. Once a work has begun, it may continue whether the following days are regarded as suitable for this kind of work or not.

As is obvious from the rules above, hunting by traps is quite important in the Kammu economy. However, the importance of the traps is exaggerated in the rules, where it would seem as if they meant more than even swidden field agriculture, which is the cornerstone of the economy. This distortion no doubt arises from the difficulty of memorizing every specific rule pertaining to all kinds of work. Here the making of traps comes in as a simple rule of thumb. Traps are instruments of death and destruction and are therefore made on bad days. If only one is able to memorize the days suitable for trap making one also knows which days are ill-suited for initiating greater undertakings in service of the family and the village. This is not a completely reliable rule, as can be seen above, but if one should forget the details, one would not err very much if one refrained from bigger undertakings on days when traps may be made.

The Holy Days of Wáaŋ, Crí Wáaŋ

Within each sixty-day cycle falls a series of holy days which are as meticulously observed as Christmas and Easter in Christian societies. We Kammu explain this series of tabooed days as a mark of respect for Wáaŋ, who cut down the ficus tree so that Luang Prabang could be built. I will here tell the story of Wáaŋ as I learned it from the old people in Rmcùal:[3]

> This happened long, long ago according to what old people like to tell us. They say that long ago people were to build the city of Luang Prabang. There was a ficus tree there, an enormous ficus tree which nobody was able to cut down. Nobody could cut it down. One man after the other came to cut it down but was taken ill and left; one after the other came to cut it down but was taken ill and ran away. There was nobody who was able to cut that ficus down.
>
> There was a man by the name of Wáaŋ, who said: "If you promise to taboo the day of my death forever, I will take it upon myself to cut this ficus tree until it tumbles down."
>
> People answered: "Yes, if you cut this ficus down and die, we will taboo the day of your death forever and ever. Yet it would be better if you do not die."
>
> Wáaŋ said: "Well, I will cut it then."
>
> Then came the day called Kót-Ñìi and Wáaŋ began to cut the ficus, but not until the day Káa-Sáə did the ficus tumble down. When the ficus tree had fallen, Wáaŋ dropped dead. The ficus tree tumbled down on the day Káa-Sáə and Wáaŋ thus died on Káa-Sáə, but not until the day Dáp-Sáə did people bury him. When they had buried Wáaŋ on the day Dáp-Sáə, people began to build Luang Prabang.
>
> After they had finished building the city of Luang Prabang, people began to look for a man to be their king. They went together to the place where the Ou River discharges its water into the Mekong. At that place there is an extremely high cliff. Now they said: "If there is a man who has the capacity to jump down from this cliff, we will let him be our king."
>
> Then they boarded seven boats and seven rafts and waited down below. They let all the men climb up to the top of the cliff in order to see who could jump. Everyone who came up to have a look, however, was afraid to jump; nobody had the capacity to jump down.
>
> First one man came up, but when he looked down, he got afraid and ran away. Then another man came up, but when he looked down, he got afraid and ran away. Everybody who came up and looked down got afraid and ran away.
>
> Then only one man remained, and he was of the same family as Wáaŋ. He had come up with the others, and he had tucked his quiver under his belt, when he went up with the others.
>
> When that man came up and looked down, his quiver thrust against something behind him, and he fell down into the river. The people waiting in the seven boats and on the seven rafts went to pick him up.

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[3] The story was recorded on tape, and is found as story No. 13.A.a. "Wáaŋ Cuts the Ficus Tree," in Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folktales from Kammu III.*

They said: "Oh, you have great capacity and much ability. All others were afraid; there was nobody who had the capacity to jump down. That you could jump down for us now is very good, and now you are our lord."

Thus they made that man their king. He became king, and according to what the old people tell us, that man was a Kammu.

Till this very day we still taboo the day when they built Luang Prabang and the day Wáaŋ died. Now we taboo Wáaŋ's days, and we call the sixty-year cycle Wáaŋ Mìaŋ. People say that the origin of this was when they began to build Luang Prabang.

Now the Kammu of every generation up to our own have tabooed Wáaŋ. On the day Kót-Ñìi, when Wáaŋ began to cut the ficus tree, and the day Káa-Sáa, which is the day when he died and also the day when the ficus fell, we do not work. On Dáp-Sáa, which is the day when they buried Wáaŋ, we do not work either. Till this day the Kammu of every area taboo the Káa-Sáa days. On these days they may not do anything.

As Wáaŋ recurs in each sixty-day cycle, there will be six Wáaŋ in a year. Wáaŋ begins on Kót-Ñìi, when Wáaŋ began to cut the ficus tree. With Kót-Ñìi you Enter Lesser Wáaŋ, Kùut Wáaŋ Nè, which lasts four days until Káa-Sáa, when the ficus fell and Wáaŋ died.

During these periods one may undertake most kinds of work, but one may not arrange to kill a buffalo in order to cure severely ill people or slaughter any animal, nor may one work with tobacco or tea in any form or make wine. On Káa-Sáa no animals may be sold or bought. With Káa-Sáa one Passes Lesser Wáaŋ, Kláh Wáaŋ Nè, and taboos are not as strongly enforced again until you Enter Greater Wáaŋ, Kùut Wáaŋ Nám, on Tóɔ-Ñìi, twelve days after the beginning of Lesser Wáaŋ. On that day and the following three days, not only the rites and the kinds of work mentioned already are tabooed, but no work at all may be undertaken in the fields or in the village. Necessary household work is always excepted from these proscriptions, but the household work undertaken may only concern the family and people living in the house on a long-term basis. Thus one may not entertain guests during either of the Wáaŋ periods. As with the good and bad days, one may hunt and fish even during Wáaŋ, and there are no days ever in the Kammu calendar which prescribe complete inactivity. Thus the tabooed days offer a change in the usual routine rather than rest. With Dáp-Sáa one Passes Greater Wáaŋ, Kláh Wáaŋ Nám, and life in the village reverts to normal.

The two Wáaŋ periods are summarized in the following table:

27. Kót-Ñìi, Kùut Wáaŋ Nè. — Enter Lesser Wáaŋ
30. Káa-Sáa, Kláh Wáaŋ Nè. — Pass Lesser Wáaŋ
39. Tóɔ-Ñìi, Kùut Wáaŋ Nám. — Enter Greater Wáaŋ
42. Dáp-Sáa, Kláh Wáaŋ Nám. — Pass Greater Wáaŋ

The Kammu calendar is tied to the agricultural year in the villages, and people who move into the cities very rapidly forget the calendar because they lose contact with swidden agriculture. I therefore give a comparison with the Western calendar below. It should, however, be remembered that the Kammu year begins one month earlier so that the year Plák-Síi actually began around December of 1927.

Western	*Kammu*	*Western*	*Kammu*
1928	Pií Plák-Sií	1965	Pií Ràp-Sáə
1929	Pií Kát-Sáə	1966	Pií Rwàəy-Sŋáə
1930	Pií Kót-Sŋáə	1967	Pií Màŋ-Mòt
1931	Pií Rìaŋ-Mòt	1968	Pií Plák-Sén
1932	Pií Táw-Sén	1969	Pií Kát-Ràw
1933	Pií Káə-Ràw	1970	Pií Kót-Sét
1934	Pií Káəp-Sét	1971	Pií Rìaŋ-Kàə
1935	Pií Ràp-Kàə	1972	Pií Táw-Cáə
1936	Pií Rwàəy-Cáə	1973	Pií Káə-Pláw
1937	Pií Màŋ-Pláw	1974	Pií Káəp-Ñìi
1938	Pií Plák-Ñìi	1975	Pií Ràw-Máw
1939	Pií Kát-Máw	1976	Pií Rwàəy-Sií
1940	Pií Kót-Sií	1977	Pií Màŋ-Sáə
1941	Pií Rìaŋ-Sáə	1978	Pií Plák-Sŋáə
1942	Pií Táw-Sŋáə	1979	Pií Kát-Mòt
1943	Pií Káə-Mòt	1980	Pií Kót-Sén
1944	Pií Káəp-Sén	1981	Pií Rìaŋ-Ràw
1945	Pií Ràp-Ràw	1982	Pií Táw-Sét
1946	Pií Rwàəy-Sét	1983	Pií Káə-Kàə
1947	Pií Màŋ-Kàə	1984	Pií Káəp-Cáə
1948	Pií Plák-Cáə	1985	Pií Ràp-Pláw
1949	Pií Kát-Pláw	1986	Pií Rwàəy-Ñìi
1950	Pií Kót-Ñìi	1987	Pií Màŋ-Máw
1951	Pií Rìaŋ-Máw	1988	Pií Plák-Sií
1952	Pií Táw-Sií	1989	Pií Kát-Sáə
1953	Pií Káə-Sáə	1990	Pií Kót-Sŋáə
1954	Pií Káəp-Sŋáə	1991	Pií Rìaŋ-Mòt
1955	Pií Ràp-Mòt	1992	Pií Táw-Sén
1956	Pií Rwàəy-Sén	1993	Pií Káə-Ràw
1957	Pií Màŋ-Ràw	1994	Pií Káəp-Sét
1958	Pií Plák-Sét	1995	Pií Ràp-Kàə
1959	Pií Kát-Kàə	1996	Pií Rwàəy-Cáə
1960	Pií Kót-Cáə	1997	Pií Màŋ-Pláw
1961	Pií Rìaŋ-Pláw	1998	Pií Plák-Ñìi
1962	Pií Táw-Ñìi	1999	Pií Kát-Máw
1963	Pií Káə-Máw	2000	Pií Kót-Sii
1964	Pií Káəp-Sií	2001	Pií Rìaŋ-Sáə

18. The Agricultural Cycle, Káən ríəm ré

Life in a Kammu village follows the rhythm of the work in the swidden fields, ré.[4] The fields are situated on the mountain slopes and cover wide areas all around the village. Ideally there should be at least twenty-three field areas, tìi ré, in Rmcùəl Village. The different tìi ré may be situated at a distance of anything from a few minutes to a couple of hours' walk from the village.

[4] For a full description of the Kammu agricultural year, see Lindell et al., *The Kammu Year.*

The Field Areas, tìi ré

The fields areas listed below are used only by the families in Rmcùal Village. Other villages have their own field areas and different ways of using their land. Thus, for instance, in the Yùan area where Rmcùal is situated, every family has its own land for making fields. The family can sell its own land to another family in the same village. Occasionally land is also sold to neighboring villages. Consequently one can also enlarge one's property by buying land from other families. It is the family rather than an individual who owns the land and who may therefore also sell it.

In other areas the land is owned by the villagers as a body, and no land is assigned to the various families. The villagers may then make a field anywhere. One year a family thus makes a field in a particular area, and some following year another family can make a field in that same area.

In a village where the land is common property, a family is not allowed to sell the land to anyone. Yet on rare occasions it has happened that villagers sold their share in the land to their neighbors. When this is done, it is because something bad has happened to that village. For some reason or other the village has run into debt, and the villagers should pay for it together. One of the families may be unable to contribute to the costs, and then they have to pay with their share in the land. Sometimes it may also be that their neighbors do not have enough land to make fields big enough to support a growing family, therefore those villagers may buy part of the share of land from their neighbors.

A family with three persons should have at least ten lúŋ for making fields each year; ten lúŋ would be about ten hectares. A bigger family should have more than twenty lúŋ per year in order to live well.

The field areas are not used every year. Instead the different areas are used according to a fixed system, in which areas are used one after the other in a cycle. Two areas in different places are cleared and planted during each year.

In 1939, the Kammu year Pii Kát-Mɔ́ɔ, all the Rmcùal villagers were making fields at one place at the Prhíar stream and at another place in the Cóon Àar area.

In 1940, the Kammu year Pii Kót-Sii, these field areas were abandoned and all the Rmcùal villagers were making fields in two different areas. One of these places was at the Cáay stream, and the other place was in the Ktáaŋ Plàaŋ area.

The order in which the field areas were used is shown in the table:

Western Calendar	Kammu Calendar	Field Areas
1939	Pii Kát-Mɔ́ɔ	Tìi Òm Prhíar and tìi Cóon Àar
1940	Pii Kót-Sii	Tìi Òm Cáay and tìi Ktáaŋ Plàaŋ
1941	Pii Rìaŋ-Sáə	Tìi Ptkéet and tìi Ɔ̀ɔp,
1942	Pii Tɔ́ɔ-Sŋáa	Tìi Òm Klàaŋ sáa, and tìi Òm Tɔ́ɔŋràŋ
1943	Pii Káa-Mòt	Tìi Mòk còŋ, tìi Òm Krɔ́ɔñ, and tìi Òm Pylòoy
1944	Pii Káap-Sén	Tìi Ktáaŋ Plɔ̀ɔŋ and tii Òm Cnàŋ
1945	Pii Ràp-Ràw	Tìi Òm Wìiŋ and tìi Òm Sɔ́
1946	Pii Rwàay-Sét	Tìi Òm Lwà
1947	Pii Màŋ-Kàə	Tìi Òm Rŋcìaŋ
1948	Pii Plák-Cáə	Tìi Lɔ̀ɔn Rháaŋ and tìi Òm Pryɔ̀ɔŋ
1949	Pii Kát-Plɔ́ɔ	Tìi Òm Tráaŋ and tìi Òm Rwàay
1950	Pii Kót-Ñii	Tìi Òm Prhíar and tìi Cóon Àar

The first time when fields were made in the Prhíar area was in the year Kát-Móɔ, that is, in 1939. The second time fields were made in that same area was the year Kót-Ñii, that is, 1950; the third time was the year Rìaŋ-Plóɔ, 1961; and the fourth time was the year Tóɔ-Cáə, 1972.

It is thus an eleven-year cycle. Since the big trees in a field do not die when their branches are cut and the field is burned, they have time enough to recover during the many years the area lies fallow. Thus their roots are not damaged and can prevent the soil from eroding. The long cycle is the reason why we can use our fields for generations without causing landslides, and therefore we do not have to move the village at short intervals as some other ethnic groups do.

Western Calendar	Dec	Jan	Febr	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Kammu Calendar	Cían	Ñii	Sáam	Sii	Háa	Rók	Cét	Pɛɛt	Káw	Síp	Síp'ët	Sípsɔɔŋ
Work in the swidden field, ré	rest...											
		.....clearing.....										
				...burning..								
						..sowing...						
							..weeding				...	
											harvest	
Names of workperiods								hrnɛ̀ɛl				
			hntrìam	krnùuc	pnúur	crmɔ̀ɔl	kmnɔ̀h	prnɔ̀ɔy		cntrà	hrnɔ̀ɔt	
Season names	hrnìm			pnɔ̀ɔŋ			kmà				rmñàŋ	
Weather	cold			hot			rain		heavy rain		chilly	

Fig. 14. The Kammu farming year (From Lindell, Kristina et. al., *The Kammu Year*)

19. Staying in the Fields, Yàt cám ré

In the autumn when the rice gets ears, the young people stay in the field houses to watch over their fields. During those weeks many kinds of birds come to eat our rice. Parakeets, lèɛ, munias, rìc, and several kinds of finches come in swarms and eat and also destroy the rice. During the nights there are also many kinds of wild animals, such as wild pigs, siaŋ prì, bears, húal, and porcupines, ré, which come to eat the rice. Therefore people have to keep watch over their fields both day and night. People who spend nights in the fields have to make a lot of noise all through the night and also at intervals during the daytime in order to scare the animals away.

Mostly it is younger people who stay in the fields, both boys and girls. They stay in different field houses but often meet all the same. Needless to say, there is a lot of teasing between the boys and the girls. For the young ones the stay in the field houses far away from the village and with no grown-ups around is a time of pleasure and adventure, and I will give you some memories from my own youth.

Once, I think it was 1957 or 1958, we boys were staying in the fields which that year were quite near the Smpíar River. Ñii Làay, Wáaŋ Móɔ, Kàm Mán, Síip Cáə, Pòn Sáə, and I all spent the nights there. At nightfall all of us came together to spend

the night in my family's field house. In the mornings we went to watch our respective families' fields. Our fields were not far away from one another, so we could very well spend the nights in the same field house. You know, the birds usually come to eat rice early in the morning, and then at ten o'clock or so, they fly away into the forest. After the birds had vanished, we called one another and the boys all came to our field house when the sun was getting hot. The heat was not so bad early in the morning when the sun rises, but after ten o'clock it was hot already. When all of my friends had come, we went to swim in the Smpíar River. There is a rather deep pool called Trlù Pool, Slúŋ Trlù, not very far from that field area.

One day when we went to swim in the Trlù Pool as usual, there were young girls at a cotton field. Young girls, not only young boys, sometimes stay in the fields to keep watch. This day when we went to swim, we went past them. There were five girls, Wáaŋ Cɔ̀ɔy, Ràw Khám, Wáaŋ Káat, Nàaŋ Wáaŋ, and Càŋ Hák, and they were busy weeding a cotton field.

They saw us walking along in a long line, and then they shouted to call the rain: "Rain, oh, come rain, for then the boys cannot swim! We are busy but the boys are lazy; they only go to swim every day!"

It is really true that the young girls never have time to enjoy themselves as often as the young boys; especially during this particular period the women have a lot of work. Now the girls called the rain down because they were envious of the boys.

Soon we were swimming and had a lot of fun in the in the river valley down there. When we had finished we went up towards the field again, and when we went past them at their cotton field, they called us: "Boys, do you know that your parents have brought down a big sambar deer? They cut up the sambar deer in your field house over there, there is blood everywhere. If you don't believe it just go and have a look! We saw that they hung up the deer's hide for drying at your balcony!"

Their faces were red, since they were weeding in the glowing sunshine. When the weather in the autumn is no longer so terribly hot, the sun gives your face a really beautiful color.

They hardly could get this said because they were giggling and laughing. We said: "Ah, don't lie to us. We will never believe any of you."

We went to our field house. When the girls had made sure that we all had gone swimming, they came and took all of our white clothes and dyed them a red color.

"Oh God, look our clothes!"

All the white clothes were red. It was, however, not the real red dye which cannot be washed out. They had used some kind of leaves which make things red but which can be washed out easily. So we took our clothes and rinsed them, and we shouted to them: "Do you know, in the autumn there are always returning storms! Returning rain!" (hŋkúur tŋkàay, kmà tŋkàay). We washed our clothes and planned what we should do to them sometime in the near future.

One day the same five girls who had been teasing us before went and collected hmpíat liana for weaving bags. They stored their blouses and shirts and sleeping clothes in their field house, and then they went into the forest. We watched them carefully when they left their field house. Later on we heard them sing and shout in the forest while they cut the hmpíat liana.

Then all of us boys went to their field house and looked for their clothes. We poured water on the fireplace and took their clothes and smeared them with ashes, and left them on the fireplace there. We returned to our field house.

In the afternoon the girls came back from the forest and came into our field house. They were very hungry and thirsty. They put down their bags and drank water, and then they cooked fresh bamboo shoots which they had just cut in the valley. While they were cooking bamboo shoots, they talked about their tour in the forest. Ràw Lìaŋ blew the flute, and then he stopped abruptly and asked the girls: "Why didn't you get wet? We have seen that it was raining heavily in the forest where you were. We just thought that you would be soaked."

Ràw Khám said: "Ah, I understand what you mean! Oh, my God! Hurry up, swallow your food; we must hurry to our field house! Something has happened in our field house!" We ate the bamboo shoots together, then they ran off to their field house to see what had happened there.

You know, the young girls stayed in one of the field houses, and the young boys stayed in another. In the evenings we used to visit them. While we were sitting together, the young boys blew the flutes and the young girls made cigarettes for the young boys and sang all kinds of songs. After we had enjoyed the evening together, we boys returned to our field house. When we left them, they gave us cigarettes.

In August, September, and October it rains very much; it rains all day and all night. In November and December the weather is warm in the daytime; the sun shines and the rice gets dry. We watch our rice all through that time for the white-tail munia birds. The munia likes this weather very much. Because we cannot to go out too much, we just sit inside the field house blowing the flutes. We also play the bamboo clappers to scare the animals away.

We thus played the flutes, and to have enough to do we made baskets in the field house. Outside the white-tail munia birds tried to get at the rice. They sat on the stalks and picked the seeds. They especially like to eat the rice on the termite hills in the fields, because the rice around the termite hills grows very well, higher and bigger than in other places.

Sometimes we were unable to go and look for food and rice, because the rain just continued. Some families are not allowed to cook rice in their field house because there is a taboo against it. Then people in the village cook rice and bring it to those who stay in the field. Often it rained heavily for a long time, and the water rose very high, and there was no bridge to cross the river. Then those who stayed far outside the village could not get any rice to eat.

Once we stayed in fields situated rather far away from our village. When we went to those fields, we had to cross the Smpíar River in two places. In our eleventh month, that is, October, it rains all the time. The Smpíar River rose very high, and the current was very strong. For three or four days our cousins were unable to bring us anything to eat, and we could not go home either. We cooked vegetables and pumpkins and ate that, but it was not as good as rice.

One day Síip Cáə, Làəy Tɔ́ɔm, Mán Càŋ, and myself went and asked the girls if they could keep watch over our fields, because we were going to try to cross the Smpíar River. The girls said: "Don't try to cross it! It is too dangerous. Can't you see the water is as yellow as cooked pumpkins?"

Làəy Tɔ́ɔm said: "Oh, we must try! If we can cross it, then we will get some real food to eat."

The girls agreed to watch our fields. Then we went down to the river. It was awfully red and yellow and flowing quickly. There were many big, long logs and trees floating along with the river. Làəy Tɔ́ɔm was a bit older than the rest of us, a strong

and brave young boy, and he said: "We must try to cross. I will try to find some way to do it."

A few minutes later on he got an idea. "Sɨ́ɨp, you climb this tree and cut down that liana for me! We will hang it across the river, and then we can hold onto the liana rope and cross the river!"

We were really hungry and we got still hungrier. Sɨ́ɨp Cə́ə climbed the tree and cut down the rather thick liana. It was long enough to reach across the river. We tied the liana to a tree on our side, and then Làəy Tɔ́ɔm held onto the liana and swam to the other side of the river. It took quite a while, but he managed it, and soon he was standing on the other side of the river. He tied the liana to a tree there, and then he called us: "All of you hold onto the rope and swim across. I will wait for you here. Remember that you should not let go of the liana! You must grasp it tightly, for the current is very strong indeed."

Then we held onto the liana and swam across the river one by one. We managed to swim across in that particular place, but it would hardly have been possible in any other place.

"The place where we are going to cross next must be even more dangerous," Làəy Tɔ́ɔm said.

The next place was a rapid, and the water flowed more strongly than where we had already crossed. The valley was narrow, and there were steep cliffs on both sides. Fortunately we had Làəy Tɔ́ɔm with us. He was, indeed, very brave and very good at climbing trees. We stood on the riverbank and looked at the water and saw the big, long logs floating by. Làəy Tɔ́ɔm said: "I am not going to give up my attempt! I must find a way to cross! I do not believe that all of you can climb this tree. Could you wait for me here? I will climb this tree, and I can cross the river on that branch, and then climb down on that tree over on the other side. Then I will go to fetch rice and food in the village and return to meet you here. Is that all right with you?"

I said: "Oh, it is good, Làəy, if you can do that. Of course we will wait for you here."

The trees and the cliffs were all wet and slippery because it was raining. It was not at all easy to climb such a slippery tree or cliff. Làəy climbed a rather big, tall tree which had a branch leaning toward a tree on the other side of the river. He climbed up and crossed on that branch and reached the other tree. Then he climbed down to the ground on the other side of the river. When he was on the other side he called to us, and we confirmed that we would wait for him as he had told us to do. Then he walked home to the village.

We sat down on the riverbank and saw how big and long logs tumbled and turned over in the rapid; big and small trees floated down the river.

Then Sɨ́ɨp Cə́ə said: "I am very hungry, I must look for something to eat." He walked up to a bamboo cluster and cut a bamboo shoot and ate it. We heard him cut the bamboo shoot, but after that he was absolutely quiet.

I called him: "Sɨ́ɨp, where are you? Did you find anything to eat there?"

Sɨ́ɨp did not answer me. I walked up to see what had happened to him. It is very dangerous to walk around in the forest when it is raining and the ground is wet and slippery. People easily fall down or stumble and hurt themselves on their knives or break a leg and so on.

Now I saw Sɨ́ɨp lying on the wet ground.

"Sɨ́ɨp! What has happened to you?"

I called him, but he did not answer at all. I ran to him and lifted him up; he was very weak, and his eyes were closed.

"What has happened to you, Síɨp?"

He answered in a weak, almost inaudible voice: "I have eaten an uncooked bamboo shoot, and I was poisoned by it. I cannot open my eyes at all. Can you help me, Kàm?"

I said: "Oh, yes, we will help you, but try not to fall asleep! You must keep awake!"

Then I called Mán Càŋ: "Mán, something has happened to Síɨp! He has been poisoned by a bamboo shoot! Please come up here and help me with him!"

If someone eats an uncooked bamboo shoot, he may react violently to it. It has some kind of poison when it is raw.[5]

Kàm Mán hurried up to us, we looked for something to help him, but none of us could find anything of any help. We just sat down behind him there and waited for Làay Tɔ́ɔm to come back. We looked at Síɨp Cáə, who was breathing heavily "phúut, phúut."

A little later we heard Làay call us from the other side of the river. He came back with cooked rice and uncooked rice and some fruit. Two other boys followed him, Càŋ Sáə and Cíəm Khám. They carried the rice and food and climbed up on the same tree which Làay had climbed before and came across the river. Kàm Mán went down to help them to carry the things and tell them what had happened to Síɨp.

When all of them came up to us, we cut up a bitter green pumpkin which Làay brought with him, and let Síɨp eat it. He ate and ate and ate. In just a little while he could open his eyes again; he felt better and better. Soon he could stand up and tried to walk around a little. Then he said: "Well, now I think I can walk. I really feel much better."

Then we walked back to the fields, and crossed the river by the liana which we had tied across the river in the morning. We went over at that place without any difficulty. When we came to the fields, we called the girls to come and fetch their food and rice.

The girls were surprised because they thought that perhaps we had all gone to Séɛn Tóŋ Village, or perhaps we all had been swept away by the river, because they had been waiting for us for many hours.

Síɨp Cáə felt quite all right again when he had rested a little, and we now had both rice and some real food to eat.

During this time of the year, we could not leave our fields, because there were so many kinds of wild animals. If we left the fields, the wild animals would come to eat the rice. For instance, there were bears, wild boars, monkeys, parakeets, and white-tail munia. We must keep watch over the fields both day and night.

In the period when the rice gets ears, people also made many kinds of musical scarecrows to keep the animals away,[6] and we also practiced singing and playing the flute. Everything which made a loud sound was good to scare the animals away.

Once we were four young boys and Ràw Lìaŋ and Khám Làaŋ were there together with us. Ràw Lìaŋ was our flute teacher and Khám Làaŋ was our song teacher. They taught us to blow different kinds of flutes and to sing. We stayed in my family's field house, because my family usually made quite a big one.

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[5] It may be that in this case it was a question of an allergic reaction as well.

[6] See Lindell et al., *Kammu Year*, pp. 86–118.

One afternoon when it was not raining Ràw Lìaŋ said: "Boys, all of you go to cut some dried elephant grass and make torches from it. Tonight we will go to catch frogs! Go also to ask the girls if they would like to follow us!"

After we had had lunch together, we went to cut dry elephant grass and dry bamboo. We carried it to the upper part of the field where we split the bamboo and elephant grass and let it dry there. When the torches were dry enough, we made many bundles and left them up there in the field. We returned to the field house, and Ràw Lìaŋ and Khám Làaŋ had made food for all of us already.

Then we went to fetch the girls to come and have dinner together with us. When we had eaten, it was already dark, and some of the girls and boys followed Ràw Lìaŋ to catch frogs at Cùk Stream, and the other boys and girls and I followed Khám Làaŋ to catch frogs at the Smpĭar River. We started to catch frogs at the Trlù Pool and went up to the Cáə Yɔ̀ɔm waterfall. The girls carried torches; the boys and Khám Làaŋ each held lighted torches to seek frogs and crabs.

When we arrived at the Cáə Yɔ̀ɔm waterfall, it was rather slippery on the rocks. One of the girls who carried our torches, Nàaŋ Wáaŋ, walked along the riverbank. Even if it was not raining then, it was slippery and it was dark too. She fell down and dropped the torches into the water where they floated. She was crying for help to catch the torches, which floated away down the river. She was not hurt but got wet of course. I suddenly jumped into the water with my lighted torch. What happened, however, was that my lighted torch dipped into the water too. I swam along and took hold of the floating torches, but then I could not see anything in the darkness. I sat down on a rock in the middle of the river and called to Khám Làaŋ and the others to come and help us, because they still had lights. And I called to Nàaŋ Wáaŋ: "Don't move any farther! Just sit where you are! I will come to you; don't be afraid!"

Then I carried all the wet torches and made it over to her. She said: "Brother Kàm, will my Uncle Khám be angry with me?" She was very upset and nervous.

I said: "How could he be angry with you? It could happen to anybody, not only to you. Your uncle should take pity on you. Have you hurt yourself?"

"No, nothing, but I feel cold."

It took a long time for them to climb up to the top of the waterfall. When they reached the upper edge, they then climbed down on the other side to meet us. It was dark and we could not see anything except the glimmer of fireflies, "sprén, sprén."

One should never walk without a light in the darkness, especially not near a river, since there are snakes which come down to look for frogs by the river too. It was not only people who went hunting at night; there were other hunters, too, both snakes and tigers.

At long last they came, and Khám Làaŋ said: "Now we must collect firewood and make a fire to dry the torches; otherwise we cannot go back! Did you hurt yourself, Nàaŋ?"

"No, not at all." She had hurt herself a little, but she did not want to tell us.

We made a fire and dried the torches. When they were all right again, we continued to catch frogs.

Nàaŋ Wáaŋ limped a little when she walked. Oh, we found many snakes, green ones and brown ones and black ones, and we killed them all. When we see any kind of snake in the forest, we must kill it. If we don't kill it, the next time we come to that place we will think of the snake we found before and be in fear of it again.

When we had enough frogs, we went back to the fields and divided the frogs among us when we arrived at the field house.

During this period of the year people are very happy, since the new rice has already come, and the work is not so very dirty or heavy. The rain is not so continous and heavy as in the rainy season. It is perhaps the nicest part of the year. Very often young people find their sweethearts in this season when the boys and girls meet in the fields.

After the harvest, people return home. Only women and girls go to collect their crops of vegetables and millet in the abandoned rice fields. When the girls go to collect their crops, they come back to the field houses. Everything is gloomy; there are no young boys there any more, no rice left, and it is very quiet. They just listen to the birds singing and the wild pigeons cooing. The girls feel very sad and sing crying songs.

They don't like to return to the abondoned fields at all, but they have to dig out the sweet potatoes, collect the millet and many other things, and bring them home.

At this time in the autumn the weather is sometimes rainy and sometimes the sun shines, but it is not so warm. The river is red because of the rain which washes soil into the water.

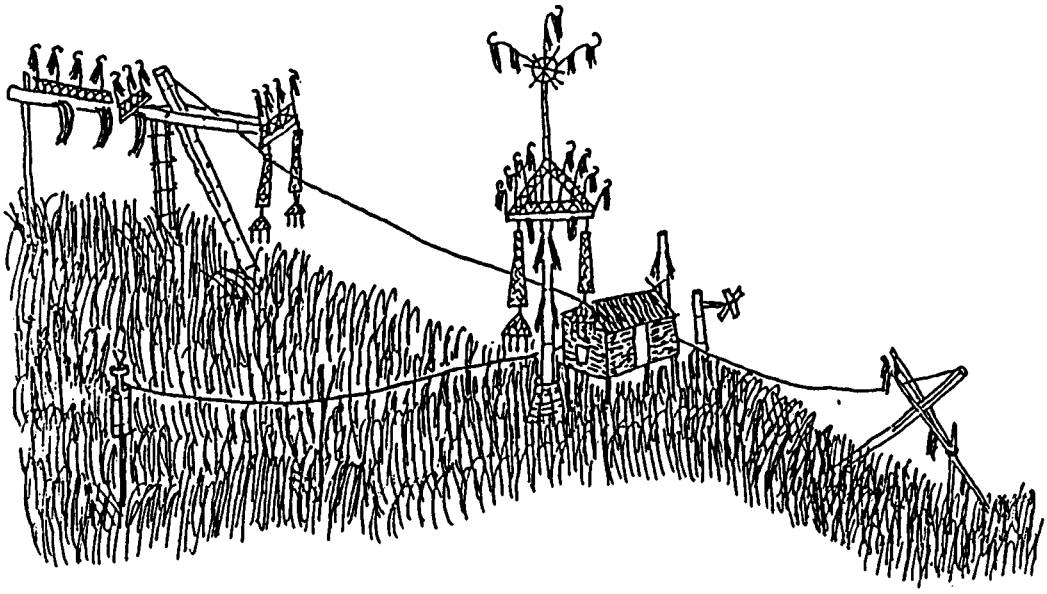

Fig. 15. A field house and bamboo clappers, c'ò ré kép pɔ́h.

During this season the weather is rather like the Swedish spring I have discovered. In Sweden, during the cold winter most people stay inside their houses, since the weather is very cold. There is ice and snow, and the days are much shorter than the nights. When spring comes, the sleeping animals wake up and begin to look for food; some kinds of flowers begin to bloom. Everybody seems much happier, although they are very tired after the cold winter. Then some people long for their vacations. During spring in Sweden I feel that Swedish weather is somewhat like the autumn in northern Laos. No Kammu people would like to walk in the forest during the rainy season, since it rains continuously day after day, night after night. When the real autumn comes, Kammu people are much happier, since the weather is beautiful. People also see that their rice has set ears, and they long to eat the new rice.

20. Kammu Domestic Animals, Tóo sát Kmmú

Most families have some water buffaloes and cows. If a family owns a water buffalo or a cow, it means that the family is rather rich, however, and some families do not have any buffalo or cow, since such animals are very expensive.

We never use milk from the water buffaloes or cows, and we do not use the animals for work either. Only some villages use the cows for transport, Impò táaŋ. We have water buffaloes and cows for food but the most important use is for sacrifices to our ancestors and the village spirits.

When someone falls ill, we kill a water buffalo or a cow to make a sacrifice to our ancestors. If we ask them for help in this way, our ancestors may chase away the evil spirits from the patient. We also kill a water buffalo to make a sacrifice to the village spirits once a year in order to let the village spirits help us. Our village spirits will then cause the rain to fall so that we may have a good harvest.

Every Kammu family must have at least two pigs and some hens, a cock, and a dog. Often we also have goats and ducks. We should always have eggs at home, since it means that we have something to protect us from illness. It makes us feel more safe, because when someone falls ill, we first use an egg and call the spirits out from the patient's body and into the egg. It is hens' eggs rather than ducks' eggs that are used for ceremonies and as gifts.

An egg is also an important gift from the wife-takers to the wife-givers. An egg may not be given in the reverse order. When we go to ask permission to do something special, for instance, when we go to our presumptive father-in-law to ask permission to get married to his daughter, we first boil an egg and bring it as a gift. We strengthen our souls with the aid of an egg. Therefore when we have chickens, we feel warm and calm.

Kammu water buffaloes stay in the forest most of the time and are not totally domesticated. Sometimes they come to lick salt in the village, but usually they spend nights in the forest. During the rainy season they are often in the village to find shelter, because it is rather wet all the time, and there are many dangerous animals afoot in the forest. During the hot season, on the other hand, buffaloes spend both nights and days in the forest, usually near one of the streams.

If one wants the buffaloes to come into the village, a horn, túut, is blown, not in order to call the animals as was done in Europe in earlier days, but to frighten them so that they seek protection with people. The sound of the horn resembles the call of a wounded buffalo, and the animals believe that a tiger is killing one of their mates and therefore they hurry towards the village.

Some buffaloes—especially buffalo cows—are very dangerous for people, since they never get really tame. Sometimes there are bad, even lethal, accidents with buffaloes, in which case the mad animal is killed immediately.

When people need a buffalo, for instance, to make a ceremony for their ancestors or when they want to bring the animals home for other reasons, a corral is built. People have to bring their buffaloes home to mark them and domesticate them every winter. This is done after harvest, when there is no work in the fields.[7]

Before the owners build a corral to catch the buffaloes, they choose a good day, that is, not Sii-Káa, Sii-Sáa, or Sii-Rwàay days, because these days are not good for catching domestic animals. When they have chosen a good day, they ask their friends and relatives to help them to build a corral. The owners of the buffaloes wrap up some tobacco and fermented tea, míaŋ, and give this to their helpers as an invitation.

Then they start the work by cutting small trees or bamboo for making the corral. First they choose a place where buffaloes often pass, and where there is a rather narrow buffalo track. It will take three to four hours to build a corral. It has to be very strong, because the animals fear being fenced in and are likely to attack the fence.

If the corral is built outside the village and not far out in the jungle, the owners have to wait until nightfall, because usually buffaloes come home very late. People then contact one another so that everybody is ready to help when the animals reach the corral. Should the corral be in the forest, however, the buffaloes are driven in during the daytime. The men—women never take part in this dangerous work—form a close chain and walk towards the corral, slowly driving the animals in front of them. After darkness the men use torches when driving the animals.

Once all the buffaloes are in the corral, the opening is closed and then the animals can be tied. If only one animal is needed, a suitable one is selected and the remaining animals are set free. When, on the other hand, the animals are to be domesticated, they are all tied and brought into the village and kept there for three or four weeks to be fed and petted by their owners. At night a fire is made for the buffaloes, so that they will get used to fire and be acquainted with the habits of people.

21. Ownership in Kammu Villages, Khɔ́ɔŋ kɔ́ɔn kúŋ Kmmú

Ownership is on three different levels in the Kammu villages. Property of common use is owned by the village as a unit. Each house also has an outfit which is for common use within the family, and such things are owned by the family as a unit. There are, however, also certain kinds of equipment and things for personal use which are owned by individuals.

Property Belonging to the Village

In a well-supplied village the following things belong to all the houses in common:

1. cɔ̀ɔŋ	common-house
2. yùuŋ	barns

[7] Cf. Richard B. Davis, *Muang Metaphysics*, pp. 165–168.

3. kntrɨ̀aŋ rtyùut, trnàam	outfit for the smithy
a. rtyùut	bellows
b. mùh	mouthpiece for the bellows
c. tɔ̀ɔl	anvil
d. ròoŋ rɔ̀ɔl	plinth for the anvil
e. srkɛ́ɛp	tongs
f. tí táam	hammers
4. prìiŋ	long wooden drum
5. tpú	side-blown horn
6. túut	end-blown horn
7. phɔ́ɔŋ	wine measure
8. yàan	kettlegong
9. rpàaŋ	large knobbed gong
10. crɛ́ɛŋ	cymbals
11. mòoŋ	knobbed gong

Among these things especially the long wooden drum and the bellows are extremely difficult to make. The drum and the bellows in our village are so old that we do not even know during which generation they were made. They may have been made during the generation of the grandparents or great-grandparents of the now grown-up people or even earlier. We really do not know.

Property Belonging to the Family

There are very many things that belong to the outfit of a Kammu family house, and they all ought to be on hand in order that everything can work smoothly in the traditional way of life. The most important implements and pieces of equipment are:

1. só	adze
2. pɛ̀ɛr	broadaxe
3. khbɔ́k	hoe, mattock
4. hnlà	spade
5. mùy	axe
6. lɨ̀ay	saw
7. sbɛ́ey	file
8. kím	pliers
9. wɛ̀ɛl, wèk	jungle knife
10. wʌ̀ʌr	club-shaped sickle
11. mìit	knife
12. 'wɨ́ar	small knife with long handle
13. prnàay kɔ́ɔŋ	drill for making pipes
14. prnàay 'yáŋ	drill for making baskets
15. srnɛ̀ɛ	iron for piercing
16. khrnùut	scraper
17. kmáŋ	sword
18. snáat	gun
19. mɔ̀	crossbow
20. mɛ̀ɛn	rat snare
21. tŋkàar	bird trap
22. pyɔ́ɔk	spring-pole snare

23. klñà	resin
24. káp	snap trap
25. krɔ́ɔt	rat snare
26. rèp	casting net
27. klàaŋ clɔ̀ɔŋ	whetstone
28. 'yáŋ	rice basket (used by girls)
29. spúŋ	carrying-pole basket (used by men)
30. prtɨ̀n	rice storage basket
31. tn'àay	bamboo mat for drying rice
32. sáat	sleeping mat
33. trlɨ̀p	canister for keeping cooked rice
34. sntɛ̀h	bowls
35. hrnɨ̀ip	spoon
36. c'ɔ́ɔŋ	wooden whisk
37. prnàay	wooden beater
38. trlɔ̀h rùŋ	rice cooking pot
39. trlɔ̀h kɔ̀ɔŋ	big cooking pot
40. trlɔ̀h tàŋ	small cooking pot
41. mɔ́ɔ kháaŋ	frying pan
42. hn'òh	woven steam cooker
43. réey	wooden steam cooker
44. pìat	large basket for storing clothes
45. krɛ̀ɛŋ màh	small basket for serving cooked rice
46. krɛ̀ɛŋ trnès	woven tinderbox
47. sáa prú prí	basket for drying food on the drying rack
48. spɔ́ òm	large water container
49. báŋ	small water container
50. tìiŋ	long water container
51. sáa rɔ́ sáŋ màh	basket for keeping spices
52. ktáŋ pùuc	wine jar
53. hmpíar	tray for winnowing rice
54. tnyàar	another tray for winnowing rice
55. kwùal	rice mortar
56. kntrè	pestle for rice mortar
57. ŋɔ́, màh	rice
58. tráak	water buffaloes
59. lmpò	cows
60. síaŋ	pigs
61. hyíar	hens

Property Belonging to the Individual

Apart from these things used in common, there are, of course, all the more personal things which are owned by the individual. These include such things as clothes for the daytime, sleeping garments, and traditional clothes used for ceremonial purposes. There are also raincoats of different kinds, kntɔ̀, hntáay, and klɨ́p. The rainclothes are of great importance, especially for work in the fields. Almost everybody has bags of two different kinds. There is one kind made of woven cloth,

tèey, and there are also knitted bags, hryà. Parents and elder brothers and sisters use long pieces of cloth as carrying slings for babies.

The fabrication of cloth is women's work from beginning to end, and the women own their outfits as individuals. Women thus own looms and other utensils for spinning and weaving, and all these things are considered their personal property.

III

LIFE INSIDE THE VILLAGE

22. Elderly People's Work, Káan kòn tháw

In a good Kammu village there should be some elderly people in almost every house. This is very good, since the elderly know the rituals and traditions better than the young. When we live with our parents, we feel our hearts warmed. It is also convenient in many ways, since they take care of our children and our family. We need not worry about anything in the house.

When our parents get up in the morning, the first thing the mother does is to look after the rice which her daughter or her daughter-in-law has cooked and left for the family before she went to fetch water from the stream about twenty minutes walk away. When the rice is ready, she feeds the pigs and hens. After that she will feed her grandchildren if they are still small.

The father gets up at the same time and goes out to the barns where their domestic animals sleep. He will bring some salt with him and let the buffaloes and cows lick it. After that he returns home and probably cooks food. It is also he who sharpens the jungle knives, and he will do that early in the morning.

When everybody has finished the morning work, the family takes their morning meal together. Immediately after the morning meal, the young people go to work in the fields. When the young people leave for the fields, the elderly people who can no longer work in the fields stay behind in the village. It is their duty to check the village. They will go to every house and see to it that the doors are closed and have a look if the fire is completely put out or not. If the fire still burns in the fireplace in a house, they climb up into the house and take water and put the fire out. They watch over the village. When strangers come into or leave the village, the elderly people should know who they are, where they come from, and what they want. They also keep watch over the pigs and hens. Otherwise eagles or tigers may come and take the domestic animals outside the village while there are few people at home and it is rather quiet around the village.

At ten or eleven o' clock in the late morning, the elderly men usually go down and sit inside the common-house. There they make baskets and cut bamboo strips for later use or make rat snares and parts for traps. Sometimes they check to see if there is something which needs repair in or around the barns. If there is something which is not in good order, they tell their sons to repair it. At other times the elderly men check the various fences of the gardens. Often they are able to repair them by themselves, but if the damage is great, they will just point out to their sons the work that has to be done.

The elderly also take care of the gardens where they plant fruit trees. Occasionally they go outside the village in order to shout and make noise in order to scare

away tigers or other dangerous animals. The best thing one can do to keep the big animals at a distance is to let them hear that there are people about.

When the sun is already high in the sky and it gets hot, the elderly women go down from their houses. They bring paddy down and dry it on a bamboo mat which they spread on the ground in the courtyard. They sit in the courtyard together with other elderly women, and tell one another what has happened in their families while they watch over the rice. When it is completely dry, they bring it home for the young women to pound when they come home from their work in the fields. The young women may pound the rice either the same evening or early the following morning.

Fig. 16. Elderly women's work drying paddy, kǽan kòn tháw cmkîn hntǽar ŋɔ́ (photo Li Daoyong)

Before the young people come home from their work, the elderly women feed the pigs and hens. They also make a fire while they wait for their children to come home from the fields. It is, however, usually the elderly men who cook the food. In the Kammu villages the men are often better cooks than the women.

When there is some kind of celebration in the village, as for instance when some family kills a water buffalo to make a ceremony, when a family builds a new house, or when someone is getting married, people always invite the elderly people to come to take part in the celebration.

The elderly mean a lot to the well-being and peace in a village. When some people are quarrelling, for instance, the elders may discuss the problem with them. When some villager falls ill, elderly people may make a sacrifice to drive away the evil spirits from the patient. Spirits are both respected and believed in by the elderly people. Our elders give us security in that they watch over the village and see to it that everything in the village is in order. It is the elders who decide all important matters in the village.

I remember that at night when it was very dark and quiet, one could hear only how the wind blew in the high trees around the village. The grasshoppers made sounds in the gardens, the owls hooted, eagles screeched, and sometimes tigers roared outside the village. Then everyone became scared, and people did not dare to go down from their houses. They just shut the doors and stayed inside their houses, and women especially were very afraid to go down from the house at night.

However, on such nights some elderly men would go down and make loud sounds and shout to scare away dangerous animals. They held lighted bamboo torches in their hands and went around the whole village. When people heard that someone was walking and making sounds around the village, they felt better and did not feel afraid any longer.

Unfortunately, only very few Kammu people live to the age of eighty or above. Most Kammu people die at the age of sixty or seventy years. This is because they have to work very hard. They also suffer from the extremes of weather. In the summer the weather is very hot, and in the rainy season it rains heavily. In the winter, on the other hand, it is very cold, and we do not have enough good clothes for people to keep warm.

23. Men's Work, Kéan cmprɔ̀

Every Kammu family needs both elderly people and some young and able-bodied men for the work in the family. The elderly people are responsible for the tools which are used in the houses and in the fields, and they also take part in every kind of ceremony in the family. When there is some kind of disagreement in the village the elderly people should discuss it. The elderly people are, of course, our own parents. If there are many strong young men in a family, on the other hand, that family will probably be able to get more meat and more money. The young people do all kinds of heavy work. As we say:

Kìn	láw	càk	kòn kéɛ
drink	wine	call	person elder
Kwàay	héɛ	càk	kòn núm.
buffalo	savage	call	person young

When there is a party and you serve some wine, you should invite the elder people. When there is hard work or dangerous animals around, you have to call the young people for help.

Men do all kinds of heavy and rather dangerous work. When people clear new fields, it is the men who cut down the big trees. If it is possible to climb up, they climb the trees instead and cut off the smaller branches. The Kammu people like to have big trees in their fields, because the rice grows very well and high around the bigger trees, or as we say, "ŋɔ́ rmpùuɣ s'ɔ́ɔŋ," rice is the eaves of trees. The men also cut bamboo, for bamboo is rather dangerous.

On taboo days the men go to hunt with their rifles or make traps. The men also undertake some kinds of fishing.[1] They also make baskets, jungle knives, and other utensils. When a family is going to build a new house, the men help each other collect the materials, and all the heavy and difficult parts of housebuilding are the men's work, as described in the chapter, "The Kammu House."

When it is time to burn the fields, some of the men go out and burn them while others keep watch over the fire. The fire is, of course, very dangerous, and if they do not keep close watch over it, it may burn the village, the barns, or the forest. Sometimes dangerous animals get scared of the big fire and run towards people. The fire itself may easily kill people, too. After the fields have been burned, the men build temporary houses in each field to be used during the time they work there.

During the sowing the men dibble holes and women follow behind and put the rice seeds in the soil.[2] During this period everyone has to work very hard and everybody is very tired. Many people also fall ill from drinking too much water and from allergies they get in the fields. After they have finished the sowing people always make a ceremony to their ancestors in order to keep their souls at home. Every family must make this kind of ceremony.

During the first weeding, when there is not so much grass in the field yet, the men make traps and collect trees and bamboo to repair the houses and the barns. During the second weeding, on the other hand, men, women, and children all help one another to weed the fields. At this time the rain continues day and night, and there are a lot of mosquitoes. Everyone has to help in the weeding, and sometimes all the villagers come to work together, pntrɑ̀h. In that case the owner of that field kills a pig and a hen to make food for the workers, and he also serves rice wine, pùuc ktáŋ. People enjoy themselves very much in this period of the year.

When the rice has set ears, the men leave the weeding to the women. Men make scarecrows to keep the birds away, and they hunt to collect some meat for use during the harvest. Sometimes on taboo days they go together with the women and help to clear the garden plots, clɔ́ɔŋ, for growing vegetables, tobacco, and peppers along the riverbank.

During the busy harvest men, women, and children work together. Although the work is very heavy, it is very pleasant if the harvest is good. People always enjoy their work at this time and everybody is very happy. The Kammu people say that this is the happiest season of the year. We say it like this:

Màh	káal	crùum.
eat	before	great drongo bird
Mùum	káal	càm.
bathe	before	black drongo bird

[1] For a full description see Tayanin and Lindell, *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village.*

[2] For the sowing, see Lindell et al., *The Kammu Year,* pp. 68 ff.

People eat earlier than the great racket-tailed drongo bird, crùum, and take a bath earlier than the black racket-tailed drongo bird, càm. The drongos are early birds, and that people eat and take a bath even earlier means, of course, that they are frightfully busy.

During the winter when the harvest is finished, people perform ceremonies to finish off the old year. When they have finished the old year, the men bring their domestic animals home, feed them, and mark the newborn calves. Kammu people do this every winter to let their domestic animals recognize their owners and also to make the animals tamer.

The Morning Work, Wìak yèm crúat

The elderly men get up early and take the salt container and go out to let their buffaloes and cows lick salt. After that they return home and cook the morning meal and sharpen the knives which everybody will use for their work.

The younger men get up and go to examine their traps in the forest. Sometimes they do this for one or two hours before they return home and eat their morning meal. When everybody has finished the morning work, they have the morning meal together before beginning the rest of the day's work.

Things which men are responsible for:

1. Cattle, that is water buffaloes and cows
2. Money
3. House (if the house is not good enough, men lose face)
4. Barns and garden plots where they plant fruit
5. All kinds of knives, which should be sharp and good
6. All kinds of baskets
7. All kinds of water containers
8. All kinds of bamboo strips for tying which should always be on hand
9. The meat and fish supply
10. Rainhats
11. Salt
12. Mortars for pounding rice
13. Spoons, bowls, and cooking pots

If a family does not have enough of these things, the men in that family will lose face.

24. Women's Work, Kéan cmkín

Every Kammu family needs to have both elderly women and young girls in the family. If there are some elderly women in the family, everything in the house will be in good order; and if there are some young girls in the family, the area underneath the house will be full of firewood, the water containers will be filled with fresh water, and all baskets will be full of rice, rŋkó.

As we Kammu say:

Kɔ́ɔn	cmkín	pìan	ŋɔ́.
child	woman	get	rice
Kɔ́ɔn	cmprɔ̀	pìan	kmúul.
child	man	get	money

Fig. 17. Separating cotton from the seeds, ìit pháay. (Photo Li Daoyong)

If you have many young girls in the family, you will get more rice, and if you have many young men, you will get money. This is because women work much more in the fields than the men do. On the other hand, the men do all the trading, and therefore it is they who bring home the money.

During the clearing of the new fields, the women clear bushes and cut down the small trees under the taller trees. They leave the bigger and taller trees for the men.

On taboo days the women go and collect thatch for making the roofs of the family houses or collect lobster claw leaves, lá trù, for making the roofs of the temporary houses in the fields. Sometimes they also go to fish in the river. Women and children often collect wild vegetables and sweet potatoes. They collect the hmpîat liana which is used for weaving handbags. It is also the duty of the women to collect firewood to use during the winter and during the rainy season.

When a family builds a new house, it is the women who bind the thatch onto long bamboo sticks for the roof of the house. It is the women who cook food for the workers. They also prepare clay for making the fireplaces in the house. It is mainly the women who move the family's belongings into the new house from the common-

house where they have been stored since the old house was torn down. Regarding the fireplaces and the roofs of the houses, it is felt that women must do it perfectly well, because women stay in the houses more than men do.

After the fields have been burned for the first time, the women go to collect the remaining logs and branches and burn the fields again to get a thicker layer of ashes. They also plant vegetables, maize, and peppers in the new fields. The women always know better than men where to plant the various vegetables.

Occasionally, when there is not too much work to do in the fields, some women follow the men to buy salt at the salt well which is just across the Chinese border. It is, however, rather rare that women take part in trade.

During the sowing season the women make the decisions about the rice seeds, smlà. They know which kind of rice seed is suitable for the soil in the different parts of the field. They also know which kinds of rice will set ears before other kinds. The women know all this better than the men, and it is often a somewhat elderly woman who leads the work.

At the first weeding the grass has just begun to grow up, and is not high enough to cover the rice yet. Therefore the women often go to begin the first weeding, héɛl kòh, alone. When there is a taboo, they go to seek fresh wild vegetables in the

Fig. 18. Binding thatch, prèey srlìaŋ. (Photo Li Daoyong)

valleys instead. During the very important second weeding the grass has already grown high and covers the rice fields entirely, and that is why men, women, and children have to help each other with the work.

When the rice has set ears, the men begin preparing the barns for the new harvest. It is also the men's duty to see to it that there is enough meat for the harvest period, and therefore sometimes they go hunting in order to collect some meat. During the harvest nobody has time to hunt or fish in the river. The young girls and boys stay in the fields both day and night. They keep watch over their fields and scare away the birds and animals; otherwise the animals would eat and trample down the rice.

During the harvest, all the men, women, and children are extremely busy. People have to harvest and bring their paddy into the barns outside the village before the rains set in. If the rain begins to fall before everything is brought in, it could destroy their rice. If they have to stop working because of the rain, rats, birds, bears, and wild boars would have a chance to come and eat their crop.

The women are also very busy during the winter. It is they who collect firewood. During the cold season they collect their crops, and every day they go to harvest sesame and millet. When at home, the women weave cloth for making clothes.

The young girls and women get up early in the morning at the second cockcrow, which means about four o'clock, when it is still dark. They first wash their faces, then they wash the rice and put it in the cookers and leave it on the fire for the elderly women to take care of. After that they go to fetch water at the stream which in Rmcùəl is a little bit outside the village, about a twenty-minute walk. When they return from the stream, they usually pound rice for the next day's use.

When the food is ready, they eat their morning meal together with their family. After breakfast they leave home to go to their work, which varies with the season. In the evening after dinner, everybody sits together around the fireplace. The young women take care of the fire. They often weave handbags and talk about what they have done during the day. It was already dark at dinner time, because there was no electric light and still seldom is. Therefore it is rather dark in the evening, and people have to make a fire not only to keep warm but also to get light.

Things which women are responsible for and own:

1. Pigs and hens
2. Tobacco and fermented tea
3. Firewood and water
4. Thatch for the roofs
5. Wine and rice
6. Vegetables in the fields
7. Clothes and handbags

These things are all women's property, and the men are not allowed to take any of these things without asking permission from the women. On the other hand, if the family does not have enough of these things, the women will lose face, because it is the women who take care of and also own the house.

25. Children in Kammu Villages, Kɔ́ɔn ñè tàə kúŋ Kmmú

In the Kammu villages, some families have as many as six to ten children, if the parents are lucky. Usually, however, many, perhaps most, children die when they are

under two or three years of age. There is no hospital and no medical care in the villages, and the Kammu people do not have the technical know-how to take proper care of the children.

For instance, only some four or five days after a woman has given birth to a child, she has to bring her newborn baby along to the field. The mother works in the field and the weather is very hot. The sun burns her body and heats her breasts. When she comes back from her work, her newborn baby is probably very hungry and thirsty, and she will give her baby her warm breast. Then her newborn baby may easily fall ill and die, because the milk gets poisonous from the heat. It is not always that the babies die because of illness; it is often because many Kammu women do not know how to take care of their newborn babies nor do they know how to protect them.

Children fall ill easily from bad or unusual weather. Yet Kammu people do not take good care of their lives. They just do not have the time to think of anything but their work in the fields. Otherwise, there will not be enough rice and food to feed themselves and their children.

In the Kammu villages small children sleep near their parents in the family house. When the boys are seven years old, sometimes even earlier, they move out to sleep in the common-house where they stay until they get married. After the wedding they move back into their family house again. The young boys sleep in the common-house, but every morning they get up and go home to fetch their younger brothers and cousins. It is thus often the young boy who takes care of the small children, while the grown-ups leave home for work. Boys who do not have any younger cousins or brothers follow their fathers to examine their traps or go to look after the buffaloes and cows at the barns outside the village. The boys are also always busy, because they learn to make traps and to hunt with the men in the common-houses.

Small girls follow their mothers to fetch water from the stream early in the morning, and they are still quite small when they begin to carry water tubes in a sling around their heads. When they come home again and the food is ready, they feed their younger cousins and brothers before they themselves have breakfast. The girls stay in the family houses, and like everybody else in the village, they work most of the time. At an early age they begin to learn to weave cloth and to make handbags from other young girls and, of course, particularly from their mothers.

After the morning meal, the older children follow their parents to the fields where they take care of their younger brothers, sisters, and cousins while the grown-ups work. On taboo days small boys follow their fathers or the young men to hunt or to fish in the river, or they go to set traps. Small girls follow their mothers to fish and seek wild vegetables in the forest. Small boys learn their work, for instance, to hunt, to make traps, and to fish, mainly from their fathers and from other young men. Small girls learn their work mainly from their mothers but also from other young girls.

When I was a boy, the children did not go to school at all, and therefore they could help their parents with work all day long every day. In many villages far away in the mountains, it is probably the same even today. If the children do go to school, it is probably only for a few years.

Small children are, of course, allowed to play a great deal too, but they often play with the things which they are going to work with later on. Boys thus love to build model houses and barns. They catch insects for fishing, and they are still quite small when they begin to fish and to care for their own small traps.

Yet the adults would like the children to help them with all kinds of work. When there is a party, the children like to assist, and about that we say:

> Good children get food.
> Lazy children starve to death.
> Wet dogs lick their paws.
> Good children get food.

Small children enjoy themselves very much at the big parties when all the people in the village come together.

26. My Family Was In Debt, Kàaŋ ò àh nǐi

A long time ago, when I was still a child, my eldest brother borrowed money, twenty màn in French silver money (see picture), from a Lao man in Ban Puan Village named Father Keng.

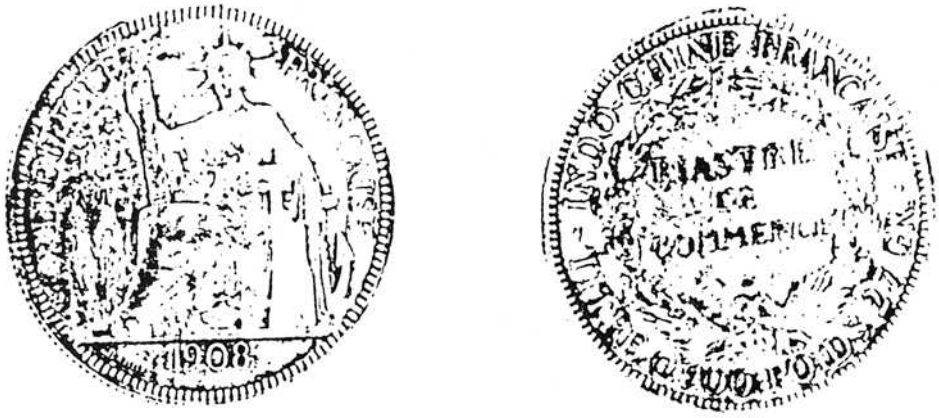

Fig. 19. Silver coins, kmúul màn.

In that period, our father had left us. He was about forty-five or fifty years of age when he died of a strange disease. I was the youngest in the family, a mere child, and all my elder brothers were under twenty years old. After our father left us behind, our mother had difficulty bringing us up, and we lost all our domestic animals except one water buffalo.

I still remember that it was during the rainy season. Our father, our uncle Séɛn, our grandfather Làaŋ, our grandmother Tèɛn, my eldest brother's wife and his son all died in that same year. The rain continued all day and night. There was no light, no sunshine. The villagers were unable to go into the dense forest. During the daytime people were in their fields, and at night people stayed in their houses, since they were afraid of spirits and tigers. Nobody was able to go out, because many people had died and many tigers had come close to the village. Unusual things had happened. It was cloudy and raining all the time; it was dark and wet everywhere. Therefore tigers were coming to stay close to the village and took our water buffaloes. In that period my family lost our water buffaloes, no less than twenty buffaloes. In those days when we went outside the village, there were tiger footprints everywhere. At

night we could hear tigers roar here and there. We regard the tiger as an evil spirit, and to hear the tiger roar near the village is a very bad omen.

After that difficult year of bad luck had passed, my family was very poor, only a single water buffalo was left. Therefore my brother went to borrow twenty màn from Father Keng to buy some food and rice for us. After six months the moneylender came and required the interest. You know the Kammu asked the interest once a year, every twelve months. The Lao people asked the interest every six months, that means twice a year, and the interest was very high.

We were unable to pay back all forty man he required at the same time. Then the interest grew every six months; it grew more and more. The moneylender came with his cousins several times a year to ask money from us. Each time they came and killed one of my family's pigs and several hens and drank three or four jars of our rice wine. Even if we did not have a pig and a hen and a jar of rice wine at home, we had to borrow or buy them from other families. The moneylenders did not eat simple food as other people do; they wanted to eat pork or chicken. If we did not kill pigs and hens and serve wine to them, they went and took a pig for themselves, just as they pleased. They did not talk kindly to us. They did not sit down just anywhere, but they always sat down on the beds or on the chairs. While they walked, they walked straight up. Whatever they did, they did not do as others. You know, in the old time the rich people could do anything they pleased; the rich people had power over the poor.

They did not care for anybody. They did not drink water in a normal water container; they drank water from an earthenware bottle. I have never forgotten what they did to us. One day the moneylender and his cousins came to ask money from us. They walked towards our common-house; they walked as if they were policemen or soldiers in the army. They looked to the right side and left side; they talked and looked everywhere, and then they came in our common-house and hung up their bags and sat down. They looked everywhere in our common-house without saying anything. You know normally people walk a little bent down, and do not look at everything in other people's houses, and talk politely. But these people, if we said something which they did not like or if we refused their requirements, would take us to be their servants.

They carried two carrying poles for they had come to take our kettlegongs away, since my family had two kettlegongs. When they had put down their bags and carrying poles, they said to one of my elder brothers: "Now, if you do not give money to us today, we will go to fetch your kettlegongs from storage. Or we will take one of you to be our servant." I was very afraid that maybe they would take me, because I was the youngest in the family.

You know the family who owned a kettlegong was believed to be rich already, because a kettlegong costs a lot of money. My brothers were trembling, because we did not know what to say or what to do, since the moneylenders were frightening us. When they talked to us, it was as if they were going to bite us.

Then they were quiet a little while and looked around them. Their eyes were flashing as when a cat's eyes see a mouse, or as if they were going to eat us. When they talked with us, they opened their mouths as wide as they could open them, and shouted aloud, and blew their saliva out on us as if it were raining.

The following morning my mother was feeding our pig at the foot of the stairs of our house. We had only that single pig. While my mother was standing and feeding her pig, two of the moneylenders held a rope and came towards my mother's pig and

took it and bound it with the rope and took it from my mother. My mother fell down; she became dizzy and sat there and begged with tears in her eyes, and cried: "Don't take away my pig. Don't kill my pig, I only have that single pig. I live or die, I only have that pig."

She cried and cried, but the moneylenders did not listen to her. They took the pig and killed it in our common-house, and cooked a stew from the pork. After they had eaten the pork stew, they said that they would go to fetch our kettlegongs which we stored in the forest. The Kammu people do not keep any kettlegongs in the village; they store them in the forest to protect them from fire.

My brother went and borrowed money from people in our village, and gave it to the moneylender. Then our debt with Father Keng was paid, but we still had a debt with our villagers.

Some years later on, we brothers all grew up and left home to look for jobs and worked to earn money. Two of us went to work in Chieng Tung in Burma, and three of us went to work in Thailand. Later on I went to work in Luang Prabang. When we all returned home to the village, each one of us had got some money. Then we paid back all the money which we had borrowed, and we bought one water buffalo and one cow each. When we had got everything in order, our mother was happy again. You know when somebody leaves their children while the children cannot take care of themselves yet, it is very difficult for the family.

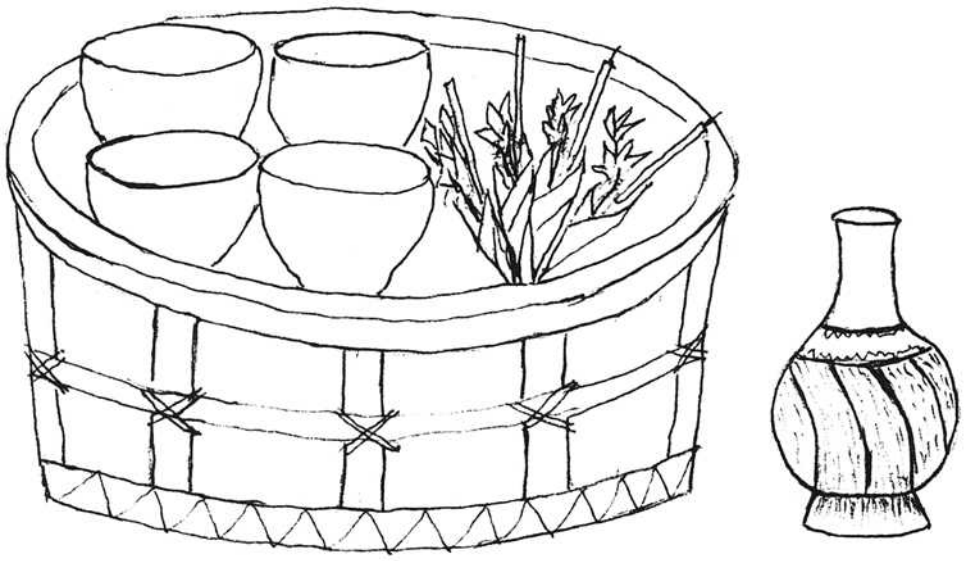

Fig. 20. A tray with cups of rice wine, candles, and cornets with flowers, used for greeting a high ranking person, khán káp púuc, ñòor, lɛ́ slúay ràaŋ s'ɔ́ɔŋ; and a pottery bottle (water container), nàmtón.

27. Catching Birds, Sír síim

Once I went to catch birds with my friends Càŋ Móɔ, Síi Thóɔy, and Làay Tóɔm. We knew that birds had come to eat the ripe fruits on a certain rather tall tree, túut ryòɔl. We got up early in the morning, and heated some water to warm up our cups of ficus resin. When it was soft enough, we went to that tree, climbed up, coated long, thin sticks with our resin, and placed the sticks on a branch. When we finished arranging our sticks, we climbed down and sat under the bushes to hide from the birds. When the birds came and alighted on a resin stick, they got stuck.

We sat under the bushes, and when we saw that some birds had got stuck on the resin sticks, we hurried to climb up and catch them. One of my friends was called Càŋ Móɔ. He hurriedly climbed with the rest of us; however, he did not see that there was a rotten branch, and he grasped it. The branch broke, and he fell down to the ground. I heard how he hit the ground, "plùm." Then everything was quiet; he did not make a sound.

All of us were so busy catching birds that we had no time to look at him. We did not think of it at all, and nobody climbed down to have a look. A while later I heard him moan: "Oooh, oooh! Help me, help me! My leg is broken. My arm is broken, too."

I climbed down to look at him. He was lying on the ground, and his leg was turned at an impossible angle, so that his foot pointed towards his head.

"Càŋ, can you hear me?"

"Yes, but I cannot get my leg right, because my arm is broken, too."

He was very scared, and, indeed, both his leg and his arm turned in the wrong direction. I called to the others, who were still catching birds up on the tree. They climbed down and looked at him too, and we tried to help him. I took his leg, turned it right and stretched it. Then we took his arm and stretched it. Two of us cut bamboo and split it into halves and cut them about 30 cm. long. I lifted his arm slowly and used the bamboo halves to put his arm into splints. Finally I wrapped it with liana. His leg had already begun to swell, it got bigger and bigger. Carefully we put his broken leg into bamboo splints as well and tied it with liana. Then we made a litter and carried him home.

He was very thirsty, and he asked for some drink all the time: "Could I have water please? I would like to drink."

We said: "No, Càŋ, we have no water left. You are not allowed to drink anything yet. If you drink water, you will die. Just wait until we arrive in the village, then you may drink water."

We did not allow him to drink, and it was not just because we did not have clean water. The thing is that when someone is bleeding, he should not drink water at all. If he drinks, he might die.

When we came to the village, we put him down under his family's barn, outside the village gate because the Kammu people do not allow a wounded person into the village. They fear that the wounded man will die in the village, and then the villagers would get evil spirits. Therefore we put him down there, and two of us went into the village to tell the villagers to come and help him.

My uncle came out and untied the bamboo we had put on his arm and his leg. He washed the wounds carefully with boiled water and some medical plants. Then he put the leg and arm in splints again. In two or three months he was completely well, and he didn't even limp. Soon enough Càŋ followed us again.

28. The Ancestors Help a Patient, Róoy kàaŋ còoy kòn cú

It was in 1971, the Kammu year was pǐi Rìaŋ-Kàə. People were very busy harvesting their rice at the time the things I am going to tell you about happened. Everyone was in a hurry, since they must bring the rice into the barns before the bad weather came and destroyed it, or the animals came and ate it. At this time of the year, the sun is not over our heads. It goes around somewhere far away from us, and it is not like other times of the year. The days are shorter than the nights.

Men, women, and children have a nice time, and everybody is happy and very glad. It is, indeed, a nice time of the year this month. Everybody dresses up and wears beautiful clothes.

Once my elder brother Mán Ràw and his son Sét Mán and I stayed in one of our fields, ré òm Prlà. At four o'clock in the afternoon that particular day, men, women, and children carried their baskets filled with rice and walked in a long line towards our village. They carried the rice home to store it in the paddy barns outside the village. The sun had sunk down behind the mountain. Only a few people spent the night in the fields as we did.

A Strange Call

I took my rifle and my knife and went to hunt along the Púus Púus stream. I sat under a palm tree, and it had got almost dark down there, since there is big jungle with high trees. Squirrels chattered on the trees all around. I looked around me, but there was nothing except squirrels jumping from this tree to that. I pointed my rifle at one of the squirrels which came close to me.

Suddenly I heard a strange call: "Àə, Àə, where are you?"

Àə means uncle, or to be more precise, father's younger brother. It was Sét Mán, my brother's son, who came and called me. The squirrel heard Sét Mán call, and it ran away before I managed to shoot at it.

I ran towards Sét Mán and asked: "What has happened, Sét?"

"Oh we must hurry home, Àə! Khám Tìaŋ and Hák Mán have come to tell us that something has happened to Còoy. She is unable to speak, she cannot say a word, and she does not even know where she is."

Còoy is my only sister's daughter, and she lived with her grandmother, that is, my mother. Her name is Còoy Mìaŋ, and we called her Còoy.

We ran up to the field house where Sét's father was waiting for us. "We have to hurry home, Mán," I said. Sét was crying and looked from his father to me and from me to his father. His father said: "You two go home, I will stay in the field, because I have a bad stomach. I have diarrhea; I cannot go home."

It took about one hour to walk from the field to the village. Mán was very weak, and he could hardly open his eyes. Sét wanted to follow me home, but his father was very weak. The boy could not decide what to do himself.

I said: "Sét, you must follow me, because it has got dark already. I am afraid to go alone. Mán, can you take care of yourself?"

He said: "Oh, yes. I will return home tomorrow morning."

"Here is your food, Father," the boy said. "When you feel hungry, you can eat this."

Sét and I went home. It was so dark that we could not see our path clearly by the moonlight. I caught some fireflies and put them on Sét's shirt where he walked in front of me. Thus we could see by the light from the fireflies.

When we came close to our house, we saw many people running up and down the stairs of our house. Some of Cɔ̀ɔy's friends were sobbing loudly. We hurried up to the house. People inside saw us climb up the staircase and shouted: "Now Kàm and Sét have come home."

I threw away my bag and my knife in a corner of the room and sat down beside my niece, Cɔ̀ɔy Mìaŋ. She was obviously close to death, and everybody believed that she was going to die. I called the older people in the village to come, and when they had all come, I said: "Now please go and catch one of our water buffaloes. We are going to kill it and make a sacrifice to our ancestors tomorrow. Mán could not come home tonight, since he has a very bad stomach, and he is spending the night in the field house."

My uncle and one of my elder brothers called our ancestors to come and help Cɔ̀ɔy and Mán. One hour later, Cɔ̀ɔy opened her eyes and wiped her eyes. She called me: "Èem, is it you, Èem?" Èem means mother's brother, and as I said, Cɔ̀ɔy was my sister's daughter.

"Yes, Cɔ̀ɔy, now you must get up. What has happened to you?"

Soon she felt better. She woke up completely and said: "I just don't know what happened to me. I came home from the field, then I put down my basket. I felt a terrible pain in my head, and I fell down. After that I know nothing, until I heard Èem Kàm call me; that's all."

Then I told people in the village that Mán also was very ill. He had diarrhea, and that is a dangerous illness. Four or five people went out to see Mán in the field, and they stayed with him there all night. The following morning they came home with Mán, and he was also almost well again.

Some of the villagers went and caught one of our water buffalo calves. We made a sacrifice to our ancestors in order to entreat them to help us in our difficulties. Both Mán and Cɔ̀ɔy were now quite well again and enjoyed the food with the others. From that day on, I felt sure that I had GOOD and KIND ancestors.

The reason for the threatening calamity was that Cɔ̀ɔy had committed a bad mistake. She was a rice mother, mà ŋɔ́, that year.[3] The person who is a rice mother may not work in the pepper or tobacco garden plots. If a rice mother does that kind of work, she will offend the ancestors. Yet Cɔ̀ɔy went to work with the tobacco in the garden plot. That made the ancestors furious and therefore they did not protect her. When the ancestors withdrew their protection, the evil spirits were able to strike her as they pleased.

29. A Dog and A Tiger, Sɔ́ káp rwàay

When I was about ten years of age, my family had four dogs. One of them was white, two were brown, and the fourth one was black. All the dogs were hunting dogs. In a Kammu village almost every house had a dog or sometimes two, and occasionally there were as many as three or four dogs in a family. It is better to have many dogs in the village, since the dogs watch over the village and watch over our houses. When a tiger[4] came into the village, the dogs barked to chase the tiger away; and

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[3] For the rice mother, see Lindell, Lundström, Svantesson, and Tayanin, *The Kammu Year,* pp. 114 ff.

[4] All big felines are called rwàay. One may specify that it is a leopard by saying "rwàay srmìñ," star tiger, but this is seldom done. Leopards come into the villages much more often than tigers do.

when strangers came into the village, the dogs barked to warn the villagers that some strangers had come. Whenever we heard the dogs bark, some of the villagers had to go to the spot to look for the reason. The dogs could also protect our domestic animals from tigers.

Our dogs used to sleep underneath the houses or, even better, under the common-houses, cɔ̀ɔŋ, in order to keep themselves warm from the fire in the house. Kammu common-houses are not so high above the ground as are the family houses, just about 50 cm. from the ground to the floor. A grown pig can just walk about under the floor. There is also a long fireplace from one entrance to the other, and we make a fire in three different places in it, one at each entrance and one in the middle. Therefore it is warmer under a common-house.

All unmarried men and boys from about six years of age sleep in the common-house. They sleep on the bamboo floor and the dogs sleep on the ground under the floor.

Often a leopard would come in order to take our pigs at night, and the dogs then used to bark and chase away the leopard. After sunset, when the villagers have finished their dinner, darkness falls very quickly. Just at that time of day, a leopard might come to take our pigs at the garden plot, just beside our houses. When a leopard came to take our pigs, both dogs and people tried to chase it away. Sometimes the leopard got frightened and let go of the pig and ran away. Occasionally a leopard came even closer to our houses, and if a dog saw it or smelled it, it began to bark. The pigs heard the dog bark and ran in underneath the house. The men ran outside the village, shouted, and made noise by beating pieces of wood together in order to scare the leopard away.

One night our dogs were sleeping under the common-house while some of my friends and I were lying on the floor inside. There was a full moon, and we could see everything outside by the bright moonlight. The village was quiet that night, because people had gone to bed early, since they had been working hard in their fields. We boys were lying in the common-house around the fire, but we had not fallen asleep yet. The fire had almost gone out, but the ashes were still glimmering red and gave some light.

We were whispering to one another because we did not want to disturb the grown-ups. We heard the eagles and owls crying outside the village and the kind of grasshoppers we call tmrɑ̀ɑc ɣùun chirped in the bushes at the garden plots. The dogs that had been sleeping under the floor began to bark. They barked and barked, and after a while Cɑ̀ŋ Mɔ́ɔ lifted his head and whispered to us: "The dogs must have seen something coming."

However, we did not dare to go outside in the darkness. We could wake up the grown-ups and ask them to go outside to have a look, but they were all asleep and we only heard how they snored "krɔ́ɔk rŋkrɔ́ɔk." We just kept quiet, since we were afraid of the eagles and owls crying. When an eagle or an owl cries, the Kammu people believe that an evil spirit has entered that eagle or owl. Eagles and owls are bad omens.

Suddenly we heard something jump in under the common-house and bang against the bamboo floor. We understood that a leopard had made its way in under the house. A dog roared "ŋɑ́ɑk, ŋɑ́ɑk, ŋɑ́ɑk." Cɑ̀ŋ Mɔ́ɔ took a burning branch from the fireplace. Then he lifted up a section of the bamboo floor and held the burning branch against the leopard's back. We could smell the leopard's singed hair, because Cɑ̀ŋ Mɔ́ɔ had burned the back of the leopard. The leopard pulled out a dog

from under the floor, but then all of us got up and made noises. The leopard got frightened and ran away. The dog escaped from the leopard and rushed into the common-house. We looked at the dog and saw some blood on its neck. The dog was hurt but not badly.

Then I called my eldest brother, Mán Ràw, who slept in the family house. He came down to the common-house and immediately took care of the wounded dog. Mán Ràw is very good at dressing wounds. Now he used a pair of scissors and carefully cut the hair around the wound. Then he pounded some bark of the trú tree and the crkɔ́ɔy plant and put it on the wound. Finally he took some tobacco juice, cìi, from a pipe and coated the area all around the wound to prevent the flies from laying their eggs on the wound as they sometimes do. After some weeks the dog was quite well again.

30. Life in the Village I Left, Chíiwìt yèm ò yàt tàa kúŋ Kmmú

Now I will give you a summary of our life as it was when I left Laos. As you have seen already, most Kammu people are farmers, hunters, and fishermen. We grow both wet rice and dry rice, and to us in the north the dry rice, glutinous rice, that is, is the most important crop. We also grow millet, maize, vegetables and many kinds of fruit. The corn, the vegetables, and fruit which we grow, we use ourselves. The meat and fish, which we get by hunting and fishing, we also use ourselves. As we say:

Kmmù	àh,	Kmmù	cèey;
Kammu	make	Kammu	use
Kmmù	àh,	Kmmù	pà.
Kammu	do	Kammu	eat

This means that we ourselves use and eat that which we produce; we do not buy much, and we do not often sell our products either.

The meat we get by hunting we dry on a rack over the fire. When it gets dry, we can keep it for many months. Also the fish which we catch, we dry over the fire, so that we can keep it for a long time. We can thus use the dried meat and fish when working hard in our fields during the busy times when there is very little time to go to the forest or the river.

Some kinds of animals are not only hunted for food, but also for traditional rituals. Rats, for instance, are hunted for food but also for traditional reasons, because the wife-givers use the dried rodent meat as a gift for their wife-takers. In return the wife-givers receive a boiled egg from their wife-takers as a gift. There is a very strict taboo against the wife-giver giving a boiled egg as a gift to a wife-taker. If somebody on the wife-taker's side received a boiled egg from a wife-giver, that person would get the pŋàh spirits. That means that he or she would be cursed and become unable to speak or something like that.

The bamboo rats, túun, are not hunted only for food either, but also for the sacrifice to the rice spirits when we begin to harvest. If we sacrifice to the rice spirits with bamboo rat paws, we will get a good harvest. We will get more rice because the bamboo rats burrow into the soil and have a lot of mounds.

In Northern Laos there are high mountains and there are many minorities living on the mountain slopes. One can live quite well there, for the soil is good for growing many kinds of plants; the soil is black, and it is good for growing rice and vegetables.

Yet while I was living there, there was not much that we could export. Instead we had to import several products. Salt, pots, and everything made of metal we bought from South China and Thailand. Most things of that kind we imported from Thailand.

There was no traffic, no road when I was young, and people walked all the time. I still remember that it took five days and five nights to walk from my village to the Chinese border, and five days and five nights from my village to Thailand. There was no industry of any kind, not a single factory. Everything we used except the things I have mentioned, we made with our hands.

The big problems were, of course, food and clothes. It was hard work to get enough to eat, but you should know that we did have enough to eat every year. Only in later years, in my own generation, has the population grown so much that it is hard to grow enough rice. We have had to divide the fields so that they have become too small to support a family. We also have to work them too often, so that the soil is getting exhausted. We have not yet found a way to change the techniques of growing food.

Money to buy imported things was always a big problem too, but then we did not use money every day. It is different with food, we had to have rice, food, and clothes every day. As we say:

Kmúul	mèh	yò;
Money	is	friend
ŋɔ́	mèh	hrñɨam.
rice	is	heart

"Money is a friend, but rice is our heart," and by that we mean that money is good to have, but one cannot live without rice.

When we traveled somewhere, we always brought rice and food with us. If we only had rice and food enough, we could spend the night wherever we pleased without problems. But if we only had money with us and no food, we might have difficulties. Sometimes when we walked a long distance, it got dark when we were in the middle of the jungle where there was no village. Then we could not buy anything to eat in the jungle. As we say:

Nák	kháw	nɔ̀ɔn	nàa;
Heavy	rice,	sleep	field
Nák	pháa	nɔ̀ɔn	ùn.
heavy	blanket	sleep	warm

That is, if we have rice and food enough, we can spend the night in any suitable place, and when we have enough clothes and blankets, we can keep warm. If we do not have enough of these things, however, we have to hurry, so that we can get to a place where we can spend the night, and that is no good.

When I was in Laos, I never heard that people were unemployed. Everyone had a lot of work to do, and I believe that women were busier than men. That is because women take care of the house and are responsible for everything in it, and housework never ends.

Earlier there were no state village schools in our part of the world, but people learned to write and read in the temples. I never went to school, but I know that there were two different alphabets. I still have some words in a strange alphabet tattooed on my arms. Only a monk could write and read this alphabet, and I have not yet found anyone who could tell me what it is that is written on my arms.

In the beginning of the 1950s, a village school was opened in Mòŋ Knìŋ Village. At that time only boys could go to school; girls had to help their parents at home as they have always done. The village headman selected three boys from Rmcùal to go to school, and one of my elder brothers was one of them.

Then came the awful war, so some of the village schools were abandoned. I myself never went to school, I only brought food and rice to my elder brother. When I came to Mòŋ Knìŋ, I used to stand outside the school window and watch how they read and wrote, and in this way I learned to read Lao. Now I can also read and write Thai, a little English, and a little Swedish. The first school I was able to attend was in Lund, Sweden.

Life in a traditional Kammu village is very different from that in a town. In town you can buy almost everything, but in a Kammu village there is no market and you can hardly buy anything at all. There is nobody who sells clothes, nobody who sells food. If you want to get a few vegetables or fruits or want a little meat, pepper, salt, miang, or tobacco, you may ask for it from another family. People do not sell vegetables or small things to one another. They give these things for nothing. Also when there is work to do, villagers give mutual help without asking for payment.

I still rememeber that I understood this already when I was about five years of age. One of my elder brothers went to exchange betel leaves for fermented tea, miang, in Kmpòɔl Village. When he came home, he gave about half a kilo to me and said: "Kàm, take this and go to give it as a gift to Uncle Ìn."

I took the miang and went to give it to Uncle Ìn, who was cooking his dinner in his family's common-house, when I came in and gave the miang to him. He received the gift and said, "Oh, what is this, Kàm?" Then he used a ancient saying,

Oo,	nè	ktám;
Oh	small	heavy
Nám	hmcàal	oo!
big	light	oh

"Oh, small but loaded (with honor); big but lacking (in kindness)."

The Kammu make swidden fields, and they fish and hunt not as a sport or a pastime but in order to get enough to eat. In the West, Sundays and holidays—which are a kind of taboo days—are regarded as days when one should rest. We also have our taboo days, but that certainly does not mean that we rest. Instead we do other kinds of work, always in order to get enough to eat. During good days people work in the fields, and during days when there is a taboo, they go to seek wild vegetables, look for animals, or go fishing. One can never stop working to try to get enough meat and fish, and the work in the fields can never cease. If one did not work all the time, there would be no rice in the barn and that would mean starvation. Should there be no meat or fish on the drying rack in the house, that would mean hunger and dissatisfaction. In order that a family may live well there should always be some dry meat on the drying rack. There should also be uncooked rice in the house and also

salt, pepper, and vegetables. Thus Kammu people used to say: "Pick vegetables at the lower end of our field; pick up rodents in our deadfall traps." Every house ought to have these basic provisions, and there may never be any lack of these things. Any day when there is no other food one may just take some rice with a piece of dried meat and spice it with pepper and salt.

Only two or three times a year do all the houses in the village collect the means to buy a water buffalo or a cow to slaughter in a non-ceremonial way. This is always done just before the sowing begins and then again just before harvest. The meat will be used during sowing and harvesting times when everybody is very busy and nobody can afford the time to go hunting. Not only is the time busy but there is also a taboo on slaughtering a water buffalo or a cow during the harvesting and sowing periods. On the other hand, a hen or a pig may be slaughtered as food, since there is no taboo against slaughtering such small animals. During sowing time you have to take advantage of the few days when there is rain, which is sparse at this crucial time. As you know, if you sow the rice too late or too early, it is not good; it should be precisely within these few days. That is why people are in such a hurry in this period. At harvest time it is equally important to get the grain into the barns before the animals or the rain do any damage to it.

During the rainy season wild animals come to stay close to the villages and fields, and leeches abound in the forest. People are very busy working in their fields, and nobody would like to walk around in the forest. They have vegetables in their fields, and the only thing they need to pick in the forest is bamboo shoots.

During the hot season, there is no rain at all. The ground is rather dry, and several kinds of bushes and grass wither. The sky is clear and the sun shines all day long. Land leeches go underground and wild animals move far away from the villages and fields. People are able to walk through the densest forest. They now go to seek wild vegetables, fish in the river, and hunt in the forest, because all the vegetables which they have planted in their fields have withered and died. There are hundreds of different kinds of wild vegetables and mushrooms you can find in the forest.

People did not use any money to buy food, however. Rather we used our strength to find our food as we say:

Só	khǎam	òm	klèɛt	tí;
dog	cross	river	lick	hand
Kmmú	tè krí	pì		lùuɣ.
person	diligent	satisfied		stomach

This actually means "When a dog crosses a river, it licks its paws; and when a person is diligent, he gets enough to eat." The hand-licking dog is probably there just because tí rhymes with pì, and when we say that, we just mean that people who are very diligent will get enough food and everything they need.

It is mainly the men's work to provide meat and fish for everyone who lives in the house. This not only costs a lot of work but also requires quite some skill and knowledge of the animals hunted and of the area where they live. If there is no dried meat and dried fish in the house, the men in that family will lose face.

IV

LIFE OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE

31. My First Job In Town, Kɔ́ɔ yɔ̀h ə̀h kə́ən tə̀ə mɨ̀əŋ

The first time I earned money must have been around the year 1952, when I went to Namtha city with another young man named Khə́m Lə̀əŋ. He was an adult; I was much younger than he and still a boy. We stayed in Namtha city and spent the nights in an old rest hut near the river Namngean. At night when we lay down on the bamboo floor in the rest hut and looked up, we could see through the roof and saw the stars high up in the sky. Sometimes when it was raining we used our rain hats to cover ourselves up since the rain fell through the damaged roof.

I asked Khə́m Lə̀əŋ many times if we could go home to our village, because I was longing for my friends there, but each time he said: "No, Kə̀m, we have to earn a little more money first. You know that I am going to marry Sɨ́əl Ɔ̀ɔn when I get home. My parents have prepared for our wedding."

Every night he told me about his girlfriend. He sang songs while we were cutting firewood in the forest. He was an excellent singer and was always singing; that is why I learned a lot of songs from him. Yet he never sang at a party, because he was a very shy man. He sang in the forest, however, when we spent the nights in the fields during the time when the rice gets ears. I asked him: "Why are you always talking about your girlfriend? Why don't you talk about your parents as I do?"

He answered: "It is already on your nose! One day in the future, it will fall down into your mouth."

"Why will it fall into my mouth? And is it on my nose now?"

He meant, of course, that I would understand when I got a little older.

Every morning we went and cut firewood in the forest. It took about half an hour to walk from Namtha city to the forest where we could find trees. Early in the morning at the first cockcrow, we got up and cooked our rice, made some food, and had our morning meal. After the meal, we went and cut firewood. When we had cut as much as we could carry, we carried it on a pole across our shoulders and went to sell it in the city. We sold our firewood easily. We could always sell it, but we got very little money for it. In the afternoon when we had sold the first load, we went and cut wood again. We went and cut firewood twice a day.

In the afternoon city people came and fished in the river near our hut. They stood on a wooden bridge and fished with fishing hooks. Also young girls came there to bathe and to fetch water.

At night there were a lot of mosquitoes that sucked our blood. Our bodies looked as if we had chicken pox, so full were we of itching mosquito bites.

One evening, around six o'clock when the sun had almost set, I caught sight of two Lao men who were on their way towards our damaged hut. We had made a

small fire to keep the mosquitoes away from us. The men walked slowly as if they would like to ask something from us. I felt a little afraid.

"What do those men want, and why are they coming here?" I asked myself.

They came and stood around our fire and asked us in a soft, polite voice: "Would you like to earn some money?"

Khǎm Làaŋ answered: "Oh, yes, but in what way?"

They said: "You know there will be a transport of army equipment tomorrow. It will be our families' turn to carry things, but we do not have any young men in our families. We are elderly people, and we cannot carry such heavy things as shells."

"Where are the soldiers going?" I asked them.

"The soldiers are going to Namo." They talked very kindly and in a soft voice, since they feared that we would refuse to go.

"How much would you like to pay us?" I asked them.

"We will pay you three màn. You are not going all the way to Namo, but you return when you reach Nampiok village."

Khǎm Làaŋ was silent but listened carefully to what we were talking about. I asked him: "Do you agree? They will pay us three màn."

His face was almost white, and he did not want to look at me. He looked down at the fireplace. It seemed as if he did not want to go.

I repeated again: "What do you think? Three màn is quite good pay." I said it in the Kammu language, since I did not want them to understand what we are talking about.

"I am afraid to follow soldiers. If we come to a place where there is war, what will happen to us?" he said. He did not want to go at all, for he understood that it was a dangerous job.

"But you need quite a big amount of money for your father-in-law, don't you? You said that you are going to marry; then you need money to pay the bride price."

The two Lao men were waiting for the answer, and they did not understand what we were talking about, because we talked in Kammu. A few minutes later on Khǎm Làaŋ said: "Yes, we will go."

I said to the Lao men: "Yes, we agree to go. What time will they go? And where shall we meet them?"

They gave us three màn each, and told us where we should go and at what time.

The following morning, we got up before the first cockcrow, and went to meet the soldiers at the military camp near the airport in Namtha city. The soldiers cooked rice in big tanks. It was the first time in my life I saw people cook rice in a big tank, and I was most astonished. A soldier told us to go into the kitchen, and there they gave us cooked rice and some roasted meat.

Khǎm Làaŋ carried some shells. I stood there, then suddenly I saw a tall, well-dressed man walking towards us. He stood in front of us there and looked me up and down. "Hey, boy, how old are you? And what are you going to carry? Can you carry my hand bag here, please?" the tall soldier asked me.

"I am thirteen years old and we will go to transport army equipment. But in fact it is not our turn; we help another family. It is their turn," I told him.

"You cannot carry shells or even soldiers' bags. Such heavy shells are much too heavy for a boy like you to carry."

He gave his hand bag to me. "I am the captain, and you must follow me all the time. You may not go away from me. If something happens, then please give the bag to me."

There were about 200 soldiers, and about 50 carriers. We walked from Namtha early in the morning, and when finally we arrived in Nampiok village, it was dark already. On the way to Nampiok village, the soldiers told us: "When you see the one who walks in front of you lift up his hand, you must lift up your hand, too, because that signal means that we have to stop."

The path went through thick and tall elephant grass, and it was very difficult to walk. It rained all day, and there were land leeches everywhere. The grass was much taller than we were and the leaves were sharp as a knife. I was wearing short trousers, and the leaves cut my thighs all over.

We spent a night with the soldiers in Nampiok village. The soldiers slaughtered several pigs and gave pork to us, too. They prepared food and arranged things. I roasted the piece of pork which I had got from a soldier.

The following morning they went towards Namo, but we returned to Namtha. Early in the morning we two started on our way back before the other carriers. The

Fig. 21. A Kammu boy carrying firewood (photo Joel M. Halpern)

path was covered with very tall grass, so very thick and tall that you could not see a grown elephant in it. On the way back, I was going in front of Khǽm Làaŋ all the way to Namtha. I had to struggle hard to walk through the grass which covered the path and was much taller than I was. I thought: "If I let Khǽm Làaŋ walk in front of me, it will be easier to walk behind him, but then I will be afraid of tigers all the time." I felt like crying, but nobody could hear it. It was very hard to walk through the tall, thick elephant grass. We saw tiger footprints everywhere, and could smell tigers, too.

Khǽm Làaŋ walked behind me all the way home. He asked me: "Kàm, if it is too difficult for you to push the tall grass, you may walk behind me. I am stronger than you."

"Oh no, I can do it, no problem." I did not tell him that I was afraid of tigers. If I told him that I was afraid, he would just get afraid too, and actually it seemed as if he tried to run in front of me all the time.

In the old days when the officers, soldiers, policemen, doctors, and such people would like to go somewhere, they sent messages to the headmen of villages that they wanted men to carry their things. If someone could not go, he had to look for somebody else to go instead, but of course he had to pay money to the one who took his turn. If people did not have any money, they had to go themselves. Both lowland Lao and Kammu people had to go when officials requested people to go and carry their things.

When we arrived in Namtha city in the evening and came to our damaged hut, my body was covered with blood since the thick, sharp elephant grass had scratched and cut me all over. The following days we continued to cut firewood and sell it. Then we bought salt, fish hooks, some matches, and some clothes. Not too long after this happened we could leave the mosquitoes in the damaged old hut and return home to our village.

32. Going to Buy Salt, Yòh wèɛt méar

Salt was always a big problem in the Kammu villages in our area. There is no salt pit in that area, and people who live there have to go and buy salt. Either they could buy it for money or barter for it with sesame, ginger, dry pepper, rice, or baskets. We went and bought salt in several places, such as Ban Bo Ten, or Bo Luang, Bo Rɛɛ, Bo Ring, Bo Piat, or Ban Kcɔɔn. There are many salt pits on the Chinese border where these are situated. Sometimes we went and bought salt in Miəŋ Ŋən and Miəŋ Aəy, but salt in that area was more expensive than at the Chinese border.

We used much more salt in our food than people who live in colder climates. Because the weather in our home villages often is very hot, we used more salt to keep the food fresh, and we needed to eat a lot of salt because we often were all in a sweat from hot weather and hard work. If you do not get enough salt, you feel very tired.

Once I followed my elder brother and some friends to buy salt at the salt pit at Ban Bo Ten near the border between China and Laos. People in Namtha province usually go to Ban Bo Ten and barter for salt with baskets, pepper, sesame, ginger and rice. Sometimes they also pay cash.

At that time we were about thirty persons, both men and women, from our village. On the way to Ban Bo Ten we met many other travellers from many different villages, and often the groups joined one another and continued together.

It took five days and five nights to walk from our village to Ban Bo Ten, and five days and five nights to walk back to the village again. When it got dark on the way,

we spent the night under bamboo clusters, or some other suitable place where there was a stream or a river. It had to be close to water, since we needed water for drinking and for cooking our food.

We brought with us some ten kilos each of uncooked rice and some dried meat to eat, for we were to spend the nights in the forest all the way to Ban Bo Ten and all the way back. The men had long swords with them, so that they could protect us and themselves against dangerous animals at the places where we spent the night. The swords were also used for cutting firewood.

The leader of the traveling group, nàay rɔ̀ɔy, made a fire, and he made his sleeping place at the progressive side pointing towards the "future," that is, the direction we were going. He made one fire for himself and one for his underlings, and the secondary leader made one fireplace for himself on the backwards side. One of the leaders thus sleeps at the back, while the other sleeps in front, and the underlings sleep in the middle.

Thus if a bigger group was traveling, there were three different fireplaces, but you could not cook in these fireplaces as it pleased you. Nobody was allowed to cook or roast anything over the fires for the first and the second leader. It is taboo to cook any kind of food in the fireplace which belongs to the leader of a group.

When we arrived at the place where we intended to spend a night, we put down our loads, and first of all the boys and girls went to fetch water. When we had fetched water, we went and cut firewood. If we were many, some of us fetched water and others collected firewood. We have to do one thing at a time, because it is taboo to do many things at the same time. Water, firewood, and vegetables are things of different kinds, and one is not allowed to fetch them at the same time. If we broke this taboo, something bad would happen to us.[1] Tigers or other evil spirits would come at night and hurt us or frighten us. Then we would get scared, and probably our souls would get scared and leave our bodies. If the soul leaves the body, the person will fall ill or die.

During the winter when we were out trading, the weather was rather cold in the mornings when we had to get up at four o'clock and cook our rice. It was usually I who cooked the rice in the morning, and I put my hands into the bamboo containers with water where we had put the rice the evening before. Usually we use sticky rice, and it has to soak in water for at least five hours before one can cook it. When I put my hands into the water to take out the rice from the bamboo container, my hands felt as if they would break. It was very cold, almost icy. We cooked our rice and made some food to go with it. Sometimes we ate before we left the sleeping place, but often we carried our food along and walked for one or two hours before we ate our morning meal. During the trip we ate three times per day. Everybody brought ten kilos of rice and one kilo of dried meat, since each person needed one kilo of rice per day, and when we came home again the rice was thus just finished. We always cooked together and ate together on such trips.

When we arrived at Ban Bo Ten, we exchanged our things for salt. We had carried sesame, ginger, pepper, and baskets, and now we got loads of salt instead. I myself carried about 40 kilos of salt plus the remaining rice and my sleeping clothes.

On the return trip from Ban Bo Ten, we spent one night in Mae On's house in Ban Ta On. In the evening after we had eaten our evening meal, one of our men bought a hen, and he roasted the hen in the leader's fireplace. When the leader

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[1] Cf. Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp. 222 f.

came back, and saw that he was roasting the hen in this tabooed fireplace, the leader said: "You are not allowed to roast any kind of meat in my fireplace! As you know yourself, when people are traveling, they are under taboo for many things, and it is taboo to do this."

The man said: "Oh, that is right, but I had forgotten it."

The following morning we said goodbye to Mae On, and carrying our heavy loads we walked towards our home village. Darkness fell when we were on Klàaŋ Kíit Mountain. However, we could not spend the night on the mountain, because there was no water anywhere there. Therefore we continued down to the foot of the mountain, and at last we found water and spent the night there.

The following morning we continued walking towards our village. After two hours, I felt a sharp pain in one of my knees. I began to limp a little, and my uncle's daughter asked me: "Kàm, what has happened to you? You are limping."

"I have a pain in one of my knees. I cannot walk properly, and it gets worse and worse." At that time I was about fifteen years old. One of the girls, who was very sweet and the prettiest girl in our village, said: "Brother Kàm, if you feel a pain like that, you should give your salt to us. We will help you carry all your salt home."

"Oh, it is very kind of you, but I will try to continue by myself first. I hope that it will get better in a while."

"But if you continue like that, it will become worse and worse, you know! Please do give your rice bag to me! I will carry it for you," Wáaŋ Còoy said.

I took my rice bag, a long bag with five kilos of rice in it, and gave it to Wáaŋ Còoy. We walked on towards our village. After some hours I could not walk normally any more. We three, my uncle's daughter, whom I call my sister, mòok, and that sweet girl, who is called Wáaŋ Còoy, walked more and more slowly. We could not catch up with our group. Not until we arrived at a resting place called Tachea did we find our group. They were sitting there under the shade of a big tree waiting for us. They all looked at us and were anxious about us. My elder brother Mán Ràw was our traveling leader, and he sat beside his loads and looked at me. I walked in the middle, Wáaŋ Còoy walked in front of me, and my sister walked behind me. When we came there, we put down our loads and sat down with them.

"What has happened to you, little brother Kàm?" my elder brother asked.

"Oh, all of you should have waited for us earlier! Look, Brother Kàm cannot walk, and we cannot help him either!" Wáaŋ Còoy said.

It was about noon when we arrived at Tachae. There was a big resting place near the river, but I do not remember the name of the river. There was no rest hut there, however, and people who came and spent the night there just slept under the big trees or under bamboo clusters.

My brother said: "Some of us will go to Tachae Village and buy a hen and a bottle of wine. We are going to spend the night here, and we will strengthen Kàm's soul with that hen."

Then three of our group went to Ban Tachae and bought a hen and a bottle of wine. The others prepared the sleeping places. They also divided up my salt and the other things which I carried, and gave them to the others in our group to carry.

In the evening they killed the hen and strengthened my soul with it. It did not help much, and I still limped and felt a horrible pain in my knee. The following morning all of us walked towards our home village, but it took five days and four nights from Ban Tachae to our village. Normally it takes no more than two nights and three days from

Ban Tachae to our village. That it took so much longer was because I could not walk as easily as the others.

All of us walked together for a little bit, but some minutes later on I felt the pain again, and I had to let them walk in front of me. They were carrying heavy loads and when you carry such a heavy load, you cannot walk too slowly, so they had to walk faster. All the time Wáaŋ Còɔɣ and my sister walked behind me. The others walked ahead of us, and we met them only at the resting places. I did not like to walk at all, but I had to, because I could not spend nights in the jungle alone.

Some months before we went to the salt pit, my aunt called Cɔ́ɔm Làaŋ went to the salt pit with some of our villagers, and on the way home she fell ill. About three hours before they would have arrived in our village, she died at the Klòh stream in the Rmɔ̀ɔn village area. Then they carried her body home to our village.

Some four or five hours before we were to reach our village, it began to get dark already. The others said to us: "We will hurry home now, the three of you must walk as quickly as you can. In the meantime we will hurry home and fetch some people who can come to help you."

They walked off, and we three followed behind them. However, we walked more slowly than they, and soon we walked in bright moonlight. Wáaŋ Còɔɣ and my sister now walked behind me. We walked down to the Smpíar River, and the path was very difficult. It was very steep downhill. When we arrived at the Smpíar River, I had to rest again and we sat down on some rocks and ate our food there. The moon was full, and the night was very noisy from the many different kinds of frogs and grasshoppers. I sat down on a rock and felt the same pain in my knee. We listened to the frogs and the grasshoppers, and the air was filled with their sounds. A little while later people from the village came to fetch us. They carried our loads, and after the rest I was able to walk the rather short distance to the village.

You know, if something happened to one of us when we were traveling together, we had to help. We were not allowed to just leave the unfortunate person behind. Therefore, when we were traveling on the way to the salt pit or so, at the first or second resting place some of the young men climbed a tree and on one of the branches he cut in marks to show how many women and how many men we had in our group and also how many rice pots we had brought with us. We were sometimes rather many and often mixed with other groups of travelers, and it could therefore be difficult to remember exactly how many people it was who once set out on the tour. On the way back the signs were checked to make sure that all the men and women were in the group and that none of the pots had been forgotten.

The figure shows how the signs meaning men and women and those meaning rice pots looked.

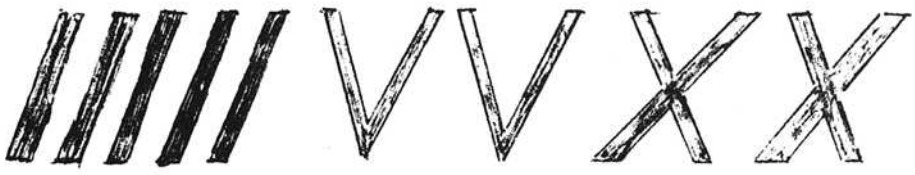

Fig. 22 Signs for men, women, and rice pots

33. Flying for the First Time, Ò kɔ́ɔ tɨ́ɨr yʌ̀ʌ clɔ̀ɔŋ tɨ́ɨr

Almost every Kammu boy tries to earn some money before he gets married. Traditionally a young man has to buy a pair of silver bracelets for the girl whom he is going to marry, and he also has to save money for the bride price he will give to her parents. Some people pay a lot of money to their fathers-in-law. The bride price will be high or low depending on whether the girl's family is poor or rich. If the girl's family is rich, you will have to pay a very high bride price. The return is also great, because the girl's parents will give the new couple a female water buffalo, a barn full of rice and some other valuables. We also try to get some money before we are going to have a child. After we have a child, we have to take care of the child, and we have little or no time to go to work in town.

Once we went to the salt pit in China as we did every year. This particular time we were five persons, two of my elder brothers, Ñìi Ràw and Mɨ́ɨn Ràw, and two of my friends, Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and Ñìi Làay, and I myself. We bought salt at Ban Bo Luong in China, and on the way home we carried 60 kilos of salt each, and we also had a few other things to carry. You know, a reasonably strong man can carry about his own weight. We walked from Ban Bo Luong and were on the way to Namtha. Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ, Ñìi Làay, and I walked more quickly than my elder brothers. When my brothers did not catch up with us, I began to ask my friends: "I would like to go to Luang Prabang! Would you two like to follow me?"

"Oh, that sounds great," Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ answered. His face was keen and he opened his eyes wide and looked at me.

"But how can we find a way to get there? Our parents used to tell us that it takes more than one month to walk there," Ñìi Làay said to me.

"You two should not worry about the travel! I know someone who wants workers in Luang Prabang. If you agree with me, I will try to find a way for us to get to Luang Prabang."

They were very interested in what I had told them. They could not stop asking questions. All of us were very happy to talk about our trip. Our loads were very heavy, but when we talked about traveling, they seemed to become lighter and lighter. We kept this secret, and we did not tell my brothers, since we were afraid that they would not allow us to go.

When we arrived at Ban Ta On, we spent the night at Mae On's house. In the evening, I told my brothers: "We are going to the city, perhaps we will come back rather late."

"What are you going to do there?" Mɨ́ɨn asked me.

I said: "We are going to buy some fishhooks in Nai Daengs' shop."

Then Ñìi said: "You must hurry back, do not come back too late! Tomorrow we will walk home early. All of you look strange somehow today. What has happened to all of you?"

"Nothing!" I answered, but we could not keep quiet and could not stop laughing. They looked at our faces and shook their heads. Of course, they understood that we were up to something, but they did not guess what it was.

We left and went to see Nai Daeng. When we came to his shop, he stood at the wide open door, and he was happy to sell his things to us. We came in, "Oh, boys, what do you want? Are you going to buy something? Here we have almost everything. How can I help you? What kinds of things do you want?"

You know, the shopkeeper always welcomes you when you come into his shop. He was just thinking about selling his things.

I said: "Good evening, Sir. We would like to meet Mr. Saeng Can, whom I met a few months ago. He has promised me that he will let me work in his company in Luang Prabang. Do you know Mr. Saeng Can, Sir?"

He answered: "Oh, do you mean Mr. Saeng Can who comes from Vientiane?"

"Yes, Sir! Yes, Sir, that's right. I met him in your shop here a few months ago, and he promised me that he would give me a job."

Nai Daeng thought for a little while; he was quiet for quite a while.

"Oh, yes, boys. Mr. Saeng Can is in Namtha today. He came here yesterday, but just now he went to have dinner in Can Kao's house. You can come back here tomorrow, but you must come early because he will return to Vientiane tomorrow at eight o'clock."

We could not wait until the next day. We forgot ourselves completely, we forgot to care about whether people were having dinner or if they were busy. The only thing we cared about was our going to Luang Prabang, and we had to meet Mr. Saeng Can immediately. At once we went to Can Kao's house, which had a roof made of corrugated iron and was situated near the Nam Leui River. When we went there, we stood at the front door. Mr. Saeng Can and Mr. Can Kao were sitting at a table inside having their dinner. When they saw us standing there at the door, Mr. Can Kao told his two servants who were serving food to them to ask what it was all about. Mr. Can Kao wondered who we were and what we wanted. Perhaps he thought that we had come to buy something from him, for Mr. Can Kao was also a shopkeeper.

The two young servant girls came to us where we were standing at the door and asked: "Who are you? And what do you want?"

"We want to see Mr. Saeng Can. Could we come in please?"

"Just wait here a little. We will ask our boss, Mr. Can Kao, first, if he will allow you to come in or not."

I was a little worried and nervous because I feared that Mr. Can Kao would perhaps not let us come into his house.

The young girls closed the door and went in. A few minutes later they came out again and opened the door.

"You may come in now."

We went in, and there Mr. Saeng Can was eating with Mr. Can Kao at a quite beautiful table. They both stopped eating and looked at us.

"Good evening, Sir. I am Kàm Ràw and I want to talk with Mr. Saeng Can a little while. This is Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and this is Ñìi Làay. Do you remember me, Sir? I met you a few months ago at Nai Daeng's shop, and you told me that you wanted to have some workers. I would like to know if you still need workers or not, Sir".

"Oh yes, that's good! Was it you whom I promised to give a job? Yes, I recognize you, I do. Would your friends like to come with you too?"

"Yes, all of us want to get jobs."

He got up and came towards us. He held my right hand and whispered into my ear. He also pulled me outside the front door, where Mr. Can Kao could not see and hear what we are saying. When we stood there outside the house of Mr. Can Kao, Mr. Saeng Can said: "I will pay you a salary 100 màn per year, per person that is."

"Wow!" Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ shouted aloud. I pinched Wáaŋ's thigh.

"Do you agree to that, 100 màn in French silver coins per year? If you agree, tomorrow at six o'clock in the morning all of you must come and wait for me at the airport."

"Yes, we agree."

You know, for 100 màn we could buy two full grown buffaloes.

He shook our hands and then went in again.

We went off, went back to meet my brothers. "What and how shall we tell my brothers? Will they be angry with us? Or will they not allow us to go? We wondered and were worried about what my elder brothers would say to us. On the way we talked and talked about our trip to Luang Prabang.

When we came back to Mae On's house, Míin asked me: "Where have you been, and what have you bought?"

"Nothing, Brother!" Ñìi Làay and Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ just kept laughing.

"I do not believe you, little brother Kàm! All of you look so very strange today. It must be something, really!"

My brother Ñìi was sleeping on a bamboo mat which was spread on the bamboo floor. I woke him up and said: "Ñìi, will you be angry with us if I tell you something? I have to tell both of you."

"What is it, little brother Kàm?" Míin shouted at me. Both of them were nervous and wondering what had happened. They looked nervously around.

"Now, we have decided to go to work in a company in Luang Prabang. We will fly by Ario tomorrow morning at six o'clock. The boss will pay us 100 màn per year each, and we have already agreed to stay and work for him one year."

"Who found these jobs for you? You know, little brother Kàm, people from our area are not allowed to work or stay in Luang Prabang. Do you know why? I will tell you all. It is because we live at the spring of the river and up here we empty our bowels and we let our water too. Our urine and our shit floats down to Luang Prabang. If you are going to stay down there, you will drink your own urine and eat your own shit. You know, if someone drinks his own urine and eats his own shit, he will fall ill or die or he will become unlucky, get bad luck. You should think of that! This is what our parents told us, and we have to tell everybody."

They did not want to let us go at all. They tried to find some frightening stories to tell to us to make us afraid. But we did not listen to them at all. It was a true story they told us. Kammu people believed what was told in that story. I have heard many people tell this story and they did believe it too.

"Ñìi and Míin, you know, we cannot break our agreement with Mr. Saeng Can. He has bought air tickets for us already. We have to go."

They could not do anything to prevent us from going. They had to give us permission in the end.

Then Míin asked Ñìi: "Ñìi, do you have any money? We should buy a hen and a bottle of wine to strengthen their souls." When the Kammu people are going to travel far away from their villages, their families always strengthen their souls. This is to make their souls happy and make them stronger. When the soul of a person is happy and glad, that person will be lucky and well.

Ñìi got up and went and knocked at the door of Mae On's sleeping room. "Mae On, Mae On, can you wake up and help us?" It was almost midnight already. Mae On woke up and came out to where we sat in her kitchen around the fireplace.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"Do you have a hen and a bottle of wine? If you do, please sell a hen to us and a bottle of wine as well. We are going to strengthen these boys' souls, because they are going to work in Luang Prabang tomorrow."

She lighted her torch and went down to the hen coop and caught one hen and gave it to Ñìi. Then she took a bottle of wine and some white thread and gave it to Ñìi as well. We slaughtered the hen and cooked it, and prepared the things which we use for strengthening souls. Mae On stayed with us, and her daughters and her sons also woke up and came to join us and stayed with us all night. They strengthened our souls.

Early the next morning before five o'clock all of us went to the airport. It took one hour to walk from Ban Ta On to the airport. Ñìi and Míin followed us to the airport. It was a very small airport. There stood an Ario plane, a small airplane waiting for us.

At seven o'clock we saw Mr. Saeng Can walk towards the airport. He was a very kind and also a good looking man. When he saw us, he started to smile, and his face looked very happy and glad.

"Are you ready?" he asked: "And what is your name?" he asked Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ. I said: "This is Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and this is Ñìi Làay. And these are both my elder brothers."

Later on we saw a man coming out from the well-built house close to the airport. He walked across the airfield and directly towards an Ario plane there. Mr. Saeng Can said: "There, the pilot has come over. We must take our bags and go to the Ario plane now."

My elder brothers shook our hands with tears in their eyes. I would have liked to say something to my elder brothers, but I could hardly open my mouth. My mouth just opened a little and closed, opened a little and closed again, but no sound came out. I could not say anything. Indeed, I was very sorry to part with them. At that moment I did not know that it was to be the last time I ever saw my elder brother Ñìi's face.

Then we climbed up into the aeroplane. All three of us were sorry, but we were also happy and glad that we really could go to work in Luang Prabang. When we were seated in the airplane, Mr. Saeng Can said: "Now everybody has to put a belt on."

The pilot started the engine, and then we flew up into the air; my liver and intestines seemed to have vanished somewhere. It was the first time that I flew in the air.

We landed in Luang Prabang airport, and there was a car waiting for us there. We got off the airplane and climbed into the car which stood and waited for us. It was not Mr. Saeng Can's car; it was a car belonging to the air company. The driver drove us to the house of Mr. Saeng Can's younger brother and sister. In Luang Prabang they owned quite a big store not far from the palace.

Luang Prabang is situated between the Mekong and Namkhan rivers. Above the palace there is a high mountain, Pusri, with a pagoda at the top, and there is a big long wooden drum and a big bell in the pagoda. High beautiful palms grew on both sides of the path leading to the palace. At the back side of the palace, there was a beautiful royal barge in a shelter near the wall on the Mekong side.

Luang Prabang is the second biggest city in Laos. The king of Laos lived in Luang Prabang, and Prince Chao Phetsarath lived in Siang Kao City south of Luang Prabang.

While we stayed in Luang Prabang, the king—I do not remember his name—died and some days after the king's death Prince Phetsarath also died.

In the afternoon we followed Mr. Saeng Can to their store. The house had two floors. The bottom floor was full of clothes and other things for sale. Mr. Saeng Can told his younger brother, his sister, and his father: "Here is Kàm Làw (he said Kàm Làw with a l in the beginning instead of an r, because the lowland Lao cannot pronounce an r), and this is Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and here is Ñìi Làay."[2]

Mr. Saeng Can's cousins stood behind a desk. I greeted them: "Good afternoon, Sirs. We come from Luang Namtha, and we have come to work with you here."

"You are welcome," they said.

The younger brother took us up to the second floor and showed us the rooms where we were to sleep. All of us were very tired. Wáaŋ had also been airsick. As soon as we had put down our bags, we just went to bed at once. Strangely enough we did not feel hungry at all. For a week or so we did not feel hungry, and that was because we were feeling too happy, I believe.

The following day the boss, Mr. Saeng Can, flew to Vientiane. He and his wife and children lived there.

We started to work with Kabo, Mr. Saeng Can's younger brother.

After two or three weeks Wáaŋ began to long for his girlfriend in our village. He always asked me: "When shall we go home, Kàm? How long shall we stay here?" He counted how many days, how many weeks, and how many months had passed, and how many months, how many weeks remained of our stay.

"We have agreed to stay at least one year! Then we must stay until one year has passed," I explained to him.

Mr. Saeng Can came and picked me up in Luang Prabang at the end of every month. He came from Vientiane and picked me up, and then we flew by Ario from Luang Prabang to Luang Namtha and Muong Sing. There we collected the money for the things that had been sold. We also asked the shopkeepers what kinds of clothes they wanted and how many they wanted to receive. They told him how many short trousers, how many long trousers, and how many shirts they thought that they could sell, and the boss wrote long lists. He wrote the shopkeeper's name and address and noted down the things which each person ordered. In a few days time we flew back to Luang Prabang again. Sometimes the boss stayed with us in Luang Prabang for some days, but sometimes he gave the lists to me when we landed at Luang Prabang airport, and then he continued his trip to Vientiane.

Back in Luang Prabang the following day I took the lists with the shopkeepers' orders, read them, and collected the things which the shopkeepers had ordered, and counted how many trousers, how many shirts had been written on the lists. When I had collected all the things, Wáaŋ Mɔ́ɔ and Ñìi Làay packed them in big boxes. Kabo wrote the invoices for the shops. When they had finished packing, Kabo called for a small pickup truck from the Ario airway. When the pickup came, Wáaŋ and Ñìi took the boxes and put them in the pickup, and then they went with the truck to the airport.

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[2] Cf. Frank M. Lebar, "Ethnographic Notes on the Khamu," p. 8. Lebar's Lao interpreter obviously could not pronounce the final consonant -h. He therefore made a contraction *akamool*, from *a* 'to have' and *khamool* or *khamuun* 'money' or 'wealth'. In Kammu this should be àh, not only *a*, for the word has a final -h. Money is in Kammu kmúul not *khamuun*, but the Lao cannot pronounce a final -l and say -n instead. When the Lao try to speak the Kammu language, they are always say pà mà, "eat mother" for the Kammu expression pà màh "eat rice," and we think it sounds very funny.

You know, at that time we worked from before six o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the evening every day—from Monday to Sunday, no holidays. The shophelpers especially were never free; they opened the shop before six o'clock and closed at eight o'clock.

In that period there was no road from Luang Prabang to Luang Namtha. There was a road from Luang Namtha to Muong Sing, but there were no cars and no buses or coaches. People just walked. The road from Muong Sing to Namtha and Huai Sai was built, but there were no cars yet. People came from Vientiane and Luang Prabang to Huai Sai by boat, but most people walked. Sometimes when our villagers walked from Rmcùal Village to Luang Prabang, it took more than one month to get there.

When we had been working in the shop in Luang Prabang for one year, the boss said: "If you continue to work for one more year, I will raise your salaries."

For the first year my salary was 150 màn, not 100 as we had first agreed. The second year he was to pay me 200 màn. We agreed again and continued to work for one more year.

During the stay in Luang Prabang, one evening—I do not remember which day and which month it was—a small bird flew into our bedroom and alighted on the mosquito net. I caught the bird and took a white thread and tied it around its leg. Then I freed it to let it fly away, but it did not want to fly away. I took it to the back door of the house and set it free again, but it flew in again. I took it in my hand to free it outside again, and now I locked the door. We knew what this meant, and we all understood that something bad had happened to our relatives in the village, because this was a bird of omen.

I said: "Something bad must be happening to our relatives in the village, or some bad luck will hit us here. It must be someone's soul that has left his body in order to come and visit us here."[3]

When we had been there one year and six months, our boss asked if we would like to continue six more months. The next morning we continued our work. We worked there for six more months. Then the time to return home was approaching. The boss knew that our agreement was drawing to an end.

I said to the boss: "Now two years have passed, and the time to return to our village is coming soon."

"Oh no, Kàm! Couldn't you continue your jobs here until we have found other workers. I do not like you to leave us, but I understand that you are longing for your families and friends, too. Can we do it like this? When we have found other workers, all of you go home. You stay there for two or three months and then come to Namtha again, and I will come and pick you up there. What do you think? Is that all right with you? I will also pay your salaries for the three months you stay at home. When you come back, you will get your salaries for the vacation as well."

"Yes, we agree to that. We will stay with our parents at home for three months; then we will come and wait for you in Namtha."

A few days later three men came and began to work in the shop. They were lowland Lao, all of them.

Our employers did not want to let us part with them at all, but in the end they had to let us go home. They paid the whole of our salaries. Then Kabo and his sister went to buy air tickets for us. We packed our bags and suitcases. The following morning

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[3] See Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin, *Folk Tales from Kammu III*, pp. 190 ff.

we shook one another's hands. We were all crying. Then a car came and stood in front of the store and waited for us. We climbed into the car, and the chauffeur drove us to the airport. At the airport there were many airplanes, and the car driver drove towards the small Airo plane. There were many Luckuta airplanes and several other Ario airplanes.

We flew by Ario to Namtha, but I do not remember how long it took from Luang Prabang to Namtha, because we did not have any watches. When we arrived at the airport in Namtha, we met four persons from our neighboring villages there.

I asked them: "Where are you going? Are you going home?"

"We will go home tomorrow morning. Is it you, Kàm?"

They did not quite recognize me, since we were wearing new clothes and had cut our hair in a more beautiful style than when we were in the village. I recognized all of them, however.

"Yes, it is me. Do you have many things to carry? If you do not have too much to carry, please help us carry our bags and these suitcases. We will of course pay you."

They said: "No, we have nothing to carry, Kàm, and we are very glad if we can help you. Do not think about payment! We will carry all these suitcases and bags. Do not think about payment at all!" They were very kind to us. Two of them were my mother's relatives, and they came from Ban Saen Sres. You know, the Kammu people do not want to request payment from their kin. That is why they did not want any payment from us, but of course we would see to it that we paid them through a gift, not as pay for their work. Each of us gave them a pair of trousers and a shirt and three màn each. Then they took our things on their carrying poles, and we went to spend a night in Mae On's house in Ban Ta On.

The next morning, we began to walk home to our village. It took three days and nights. I put my coins in a long bag which I had got from Wáaŋ Cɔ̀ɔy, and I bound the bag around my waist. It was very heavy. I had got 350 màn in silver coins. We went and it got dark before we came to the Tachae rest hut. There were lots of travelers already in that rest hut. They had also come to spend the night there, because in that period there were dangerous tigers in the area.

Fortunately we met people whom I knew, and one of them recognized me, since we had met before. He looked me and asked: "Is it you, Kàm Rèw?"

"Yes, it is me. Where are you going, Mán?"

He said: "Come up here! There is still room enough for all of you. You may come and stay with us here."

We climbed up. There were many young girls, Mán's cousins and relatives who had followed him to buy salt. Some of them went down and prepared an evening meal for us. I still remember that they cooked dried squirrel meat with banana flowers. It tasted very good, especially as we had not eaten any Kammu food for a long time. We spent the night together in one big room. However, that night none of us could sleep at all. Both we men and the girls sat and sang songs all night long. We had a very nice time together.

In the morning, before we parted from each other, we gave them some needles and soap and several matchboxes. The girls gave us some tobacco and banana leaves for making cigarettes. Then we walked in one direction, and they walked in another direction. The girls sang songs in a loud voice and called out to us until we could not see one another, but we could still hear their voices calling us.

I had a very nice time all the way home and also during our stay in Luang Prabang. But unfortunately, when we arrived at the village gate, the dogs started to

bark everywhere. You know, when the dogs see strangers they bark. The dogs barked everywhere and ran towards us. We came into the common-house which is closest to our house. We put down our bags and sat down. Almost everybody came down to see us. My mother, my elder brothers, and my sister came, and people who lived near the common-house there came to see us.

I looked around to see all of them, but I could not see one of my elder brothers, Ñìi. I asked: "Where is Ñìi?"

"Oh, Kàm, Ñìi died a year ago," my mother told me.

I cried and cried, because I loved Ñìi very much. Then all my friends, both boys and girls came to embrace me.

I told them that I didn't want to live in the village any longer. I said that I would like to return to Luang Prabang at once if my beloved elder brother had really left us. Some of them brought water and others brought wine to greet us. I told my cousins and friends about the omen with the bird that had come and alighted on our mosquito net: "During the time we were in Luang Prabang, one evening a small bird flew into our bedroom and alighted on our mosquito net. It must have been Ñìi's soul which came to visit us there."

Then our kin and friends came down with jars of wine, and they killed three pigs and made food from the pork. They sang songs all night long. The next morning my sister's husband took my money bag, and poured out the money in flat baskets. He and his younger brother Ràw Lìaŋ sat there and counted all the money I had got. Then he asked his wife, my sister: "Míaŋ Ràw, do we have any more pigs? If so, may I have one, since we are going to make a sacrifice to this money here."

My sister told him to use one of her pigs, so he told his younger brother to catch the pig, while he himself sat there counting money. They caught a pig and killed it, and used its blood to smear all over the heap of money.

You know, Kammu people think that money, rice, and animals have souls just as people do. Kammu people therefore sacrifice to their wealth, because they would like their wealth to be happy and stay in their family forever. However, if you do not give any sacrifice to your wealth, probably the soul of the wealth will sulk and leave your family. When the soul of wealth has left our house, then we are likely to fall ill and become unable to work, and our wealth will be finished quickly. However, if our wealth is happy, the owner of the wealth will also be happy and live well; he will be lucky and able to work, and he will earn more money.

Two or three weeks later my mother asked me: "What are you going to give your sister, Kàm? Your elder brothers have given her two water buffaloes! Now it is your turn, Kàm."

When my sister and her husband came to our house, my mother asked: "What would you like to have from Kàm, Daughter? He will give you some gifts."

I said: "Oh, I will give them some money. But my eldest brother has buried all my money in the forest. He took all the money and put it in a jar and buried it." You know, Kammu people used to bury their money underground to protect it against fire. The following day I asked my eldest brother to dig the money up and count out fifty màn for me for that was what I wanted to give my sister.

My brother went to the forest and dug the money out, and gave me fifty màn. I told my mother to call my sister and her husband to come to our house. When they came in I counted the fifty màn and gave it to them, and they were very happy to receive the gift.

Kammu men love their sisters as they love their mothers. For instance, I cared more about my sister than about my brothers. That is because we think men can take care of themselves; they can go anywhere they please. If my mother or my sister leave the village to go and work in order to earn money in the city, then we men will lose face. We do not want our women to work so hard or do any dangerous work. Men could wear tattered clothes without shame in front of others. However, if women wear worn-out clothes, they would feel ashamed. Whatever we have, we would like our sisters to have too.

We stayed at home in our village. We did not return to Luang Prabang any more. I told several of the young men that if someone would like to have those jobs, they could go there and get them, but nobody wanted to go and stay in Luang Prabang. Therefore we lost contact with our employer, Mr. Saeng Can.

We could not get the salary for the three months of vacation, because to get the money, we would have had to take up the jobs again. We never met Mr. Saeng Can and his family again. The reason why we could not return to work in Luang Prabang was that Ñìi's and Wáaŋ's parents did not allow us to go again.

34. From Jungle to Town, Càak prì, rɔ̀ɔt tàa mɨ̀aŋ

As I have already said I was born in Rmcùal Village in the province of Namtha in northern Laos. I grew up there and lived there until February 1973. That year I went to stay with my relatives in the Huai Sai area on the Mekong River, which forms the border between Laos and Thailand. I stayed with my brother-in-law, who lived in a Kammu village there. At that time they were clearing their fields, and I followed them to their fields every day, just as I would have done at home. One day I went and helped one family, and the following day I went and helped another family, going round and round in turns. We used axes and saws to cut down the bigger trees, and with our jungle knives we cut the grass and smaller trees. That was in February and when March began, the weather was very hot, and the sun burned our faces. When we cut down the trees, the red ants bit our bodies, and there were a lot of itch fruits which made us itch all over. It was very tough labor.

When I had been in Huai Sai for two or three weeks, my brother-in-law and I went to seek wild vegetables at the stream one day. About noontime I suddenly heard someone call my name: "Kàm Ràw, Kàm Ràw!" To hear an unknown voice call my name frightened me very much. At that time the war was raging in that area, and we were all scared of strangers. I myself was a newcomer and did not know very many people in the area, and I did not expect anyone to come and see me.

Therefore when we heard that man call, I said to my brother-in-law: "You go and see, Láa, if you know that man who comes here calling my name." My heart beat faster and faster, for I did not like it at all. My brother-in-law, who knew most people there, went to see the man. He was standing only about a hundred meters from us, but we could not see one another, since there was very dense forest between us. They talked to one another and I could even hear what they were saying. I heard the man, who had come from Thailand, say: "I come from Lampang, and I work with a foreigner. Today she let me go to find people who can tell stories. That is why I come here to look for Kàm Ràw, because I have heard that he is a storyteller."

When my brother-in-law came back to me, he said: "It is a Mr. Taen from Lampang in Thailand, and he would like to talk with you."

I answered: "Oh, no! Not for the life of me. I only trust you, not someone else because I do not know anyone here."

My brother-in-law looked a bit astonished, because otherwise I was not afraid of people, not even of total strangers. Now so many years later I myself do not understand why I got so very scared. It is as if I had known that my entire life was going to change from that day on.

My brother-in-law went to speak to the strange man again. He did not know what to say, so he said: "No, Kàm Ràw is not here, he is in Huai Sai."

The fellow did not listen to him at all, because other people had already told him that I was looking for vegetables in that valley just then. Therefore Mr. Taen just came towards me. He walked with his back a little bent as a very polite and kind person would do when meeting an unknown person. My eyes still looked round and I was ready to run away.

He said: "Oh, Kàm Ràw, I hope you are well?"

"Ah, no, not really! Who are you, and where do you come from?"

"You know, I come from Lampang, and I am working with a Swedish researcher."

How could I know what Swedish or Sweden meant? And what on earth was a researcher? I had never heard such words before.

The fellow was Kammu just as I am, but he was dressed in very beautiful clothes, and he looked like a real man of the city, for he had been working in Thailand for many years. However, we did not know each other at all and had never met before.

"Could you tell some stories and could you follow me to Chiang Khong and tell your stories? A Swedish researcher will record your stories."

Then I began to understand who he was and what he wanted.

"Yes," I said, "I can tell many stories, but how would I be able to go there? I do not have any money at all. I cannot pay for a trip, you know." It cost about 50 baht, that is only $2, but 50 baht was very hard for the poor Kàm Ràw to find, since I was not at home. I was just visiting Mòk Kcɔ́ɔk village, and that village was not even a real village but a temporary one for people who could not go home because of the war.

Mr. Taen said: "Oh, that is no problem at all; she will pay for all your trips and your food."

I agreed to follow him across the Mekong to Chiang Khong in Thailand and met Kristina Lindell, who was working with the Kammu language and had come to look for more people who could tell folktales.

That first day I did not tell any of my stories, since there were three Kammu people who had come at the same time. Kristina told us about her work, and I got extremely interested, for I had thought for many years that it was a pity that we Kammu were beginning to forget our own stories. Not only I but also other storytellers had been talking about this, and quite a few people—among them Mr. Taen who had come to find me—had begun to collect old Kammu things. Many of us regretted very much that nowadays our young girls cannot make things like the beautiful bags that our mothers and grandmothers used to make. So when Kristina asked me if I could and would like to follow her and help her in the work in Lampang for a few months, I said: "Oh yes!"

Therefore we decided to let the other tellers tell their stories first, because I could tell my stories in Lampang, where Kristina and of course Mr. Taen had many Kammu friends.

I returned to Huai Sai again and met my brother-in-law and some other Kammu people there. I told them that I was going to work in Lampang in Thailand, and they

promised to send a message to my people in Rmcùəl as soon as someone was going there. It took no time to pack my things, because I had only brought a bag with two shirts and a pair of trousers with me from Rmcùəl.

The following day Mr. Taen drove a Landrover from Chiang Khong to Chiang Rai, and we spent a night in a hotel there. It was the first time in my life I slept in a hotel, and I thought: "Oh, this is very convenient, people have a bed here; both toilet and bathroom you can find here. People need not to go anywhere at all. Those who stay here need not even go to fetch water. If they need water, they just turn on the tap and water comes by itself." To me this was very exciting, you see, because this was the first time I had ever experienced the comforts of the Western style of life.

However, it was not only the comforts but also the unknown dangers of this kind of life I learned in that same hotel. The weather was very hot, and in the evening I wanted to take a bath in the bathroom. I went in and it was dark already. I tried to switch on the light, but the electrical switch was damaged, and I almost died when I tried to turn it on. Poor Kàm! The switch was not insulated, and an electric shock went through my finger. The electricity seemed to pull my arm until I thought my arm would come out. Happily the fuse was blown, but I understood that I could have died.

It dawned upon me that electricity can be as dangerous as a cobra, and now I know very well that cars kill more people than tigers do. And speaking of people, there are more dangerous people around in the cities than you would ever dream of encountering in the jungle.

The following morning Kristina called me to have beakfast in the restaurant on the ground floor of the hotel. Breakfast was bacon and eggs, but I longed for some cooked rice with pounded peppers, because I had never eaten food like that before.

I followed her and worked with her at the field station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies in Lampang. It was a very nice place, and the staff there were very kind to me all the time. To begin with I felt shy with them, but then I understood that they were all very interested in our work and that they wanted to help in all ways they could.

I worked in Lampang for some months, and there I learned to read and write my own language in the transcription Kristina had worked out already before we met. Kammu has no script, so we had to use transcription. When I first met her in Chiang Khong, Kristina had begun to understand but could not yet speak the Kammu language. During the time we worked in Lampang, she taught me English and I taught her Kammu. There were also several other Kammu working with us both then and later, and we recorded several dialects of the language. Also many folktales were both recorded and then discussed in the evenings when many storytellers came together. It interested me very much, and I felt that I learned very much from the work.

Then Kristina returned to Sweden, but I stayed at the field station of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies in Lampang, where I worked with the archeologist Dr. Per Sorensen and took part in his archeological excavations at Phrae. This kind of work was also extremely interesting, and I wanted to continue with my new life.

All through the year Kristina was in Sweden and I was in Thailand, we kept contact with one another by writing letters in the Kammu language. From this correspondence, in which I sometimes had to draw pictures to explain difficult words, Kristina learned the Kammu language, and I had to teach myself to draw, something which I had never done before.

In 1974 the Kammu Language and Folklore Project got a grant from the Swedish Humanistic Research Council, and that allowed me to come to Sweden to continue my job. When Kristina made a telephone call from Lund and told me this, I got very excited and for the first time in my life I was unable to sleep at night.

Again we worked together in Southeast Asia for some four months, and then we both went to Sweden. Since then I have been working at Lund University on Kammu folklore, culture, religion, language, music and songs together with several other researchers, both from Sweden and from other countries.

One of the researchers I met soon after my arrival in Lund was Professor Karl Gustav Izikowitz. He invited us to his summer house in the archipelago in western Sweden, and there I spent one of the happiest weeks of my life. Imagine that he was in Laos studying the Rmèet (Lamet) before I was born! He brought home to me that I could and should do that which he—and no other foreign researcher either—could possibly do, namely report on our life and culture as we ourselves experience it. He told me that I should write my autobiography, and when I said that I could not do it, he told me that I should start to collect notes—and that I have done since that very day. Before we left the island, he also gave me a copy of his article "Traps"[4] and some pictures of the Lamet and the Puli Akha, Laos, and French Indochina and said: "Because of the war, I never had the time to find out about the ceremonies and the work; please do inform me!"

The answer is this book, parts of which Izikowitz read and gave me comments on before his death. In the near future I hope to be able to write a book on the life of a mountain villager in a foreign country.

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[4] Karl Gustav Izikowitz, "Traps from the Lamet and the Puli-Akha, Laos, French Indochina," *Ethos* 1 (Gothenburg), 1939.

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GLOSSARY

àa	uncle (father's younger brother)
àar	kind of cicada
àay ràk	village spirits
bɔɔ	not (Lao)
cáa	village priest
cáw	lord
cà	dirty
chɨa look	illness
cìɨrìɨ ckràk	silence
cìɨ	name
cláaŋ	message, letter
clél	kind of cicada
cntrìŋ klɔ́	the protruding decorations carved at the edge of the roof
cót	to write
cɔ́ɔc	sleeping place close to the door
cɔ̀ɔŋ	common-house
crɛ́ɛŋ	cymbals
crí	taboo
crkɔ́ɔy	medicine plant
cw'àw	sound of many people talking
c'ò ré	field house
dɛ́ɛn tìɨ	border, boundary
dɨan	month
dɔ́ɔk mìɨ	the second series of days
èem	father-in-law, wife-giver
èes	area's spirit
èh	do, make
faa	sky (Lao)
háan	die
hám	right
hɛ́ɛl kòh	first weeding
hɛ́ɛm	younger brother
hɛ́ɛt lwèŋ	shout, call
híc ŋɔ́	pound rice
hɨan	house, home (Lao)
hmpɨat	kind of liana
hmpɔ́ɔr	tamarind
hntáar ŋɔ́	to dry rice

hŋkúr tŋkàay	autumn storm coming from the east
hrmàan	grave
hrnɨ̀m	winter
húal	bear
h'éep	kind of spirit
ɨ̀ɨlèk	kind of cicada
ɨɨɨ ɨɨɨ	sound of a tiger or a person
káan	work
kàaŋ	house
kàaŋ khéɛ	a bent roof house
kàaŋ kóŋ	a round house
kàaŋ tàp	a covered house
kàm	to rescue
káp	and, with
khá	oak, chestnut
kháa	slave
kháay	son-in-law, wife-taker
khɔ́ɔŋ kɔ́ɔn kúŋ	village property
kɨ́t	burial place
klàaŋ trkɨ́l	trivet
klàŋ ñèk ñèk	continue to rain
klɨtɔ̀ɔŋ	bamboo beaters
klúaŋ	inside
kmà tŋkàay	autumn rain coming from the east
kòn	person, people
kɔ́ɔn núm	unmarried girls
kɔ́ɔn ñɛ̀	child
kɔ̀ɔŋ	cook food
kplɨ̀p kŋlèeŋ	disturb by making noise
krɔ́ɔk rŋkrɔ́ɔk	sound of snoring
krwàaŋ	kind of cicada
krwès	ceremony for starting to drink wine
kúŋ	village
kùut	come in
kwés	make a ceremony for starting to drink wine
lá trù	lobster claw leaf
làas	platform
làas lɨaŋ lòok	platform at the back
laay	many, much (Lao)
lɛ̀ɛ	parakeet
lìaŋ	feed, sacrifice
lɨ̀aŋ	direction
lɨɨ	or
lkùun	village priest
lŋìi	mango
lʌ̀ʌ	talk, speak, tell
lók	pen, coop
lúh	hole
lúŋ	field measure

lùuy	stomach
mà ŋɔ́	rice's mother
maa khaw	soak rice (Lao)
mák mìi	jackfruit
mák phúk	pomelo
màn	silver coin
mèey bák	message
màh	to be
mìi	day, the first series of days
mòoŋ	knobbed gong
mòŋ	month
mɔ́ɔ	shaman
mɔ̀ɔk	sister
nàay báan	village headman
nàm	water (Lao)
nàp	count
nîi	run away (Lao)
nɔ̀ɔy	small, little (Lao)
ñèe	white eye bird
ñéey	big (Lao)
ŋáak, ŋáak	howl of dog
ŋɔ́	rice
páak	crack
páaŋ	spleen
pán rn'àh	division of work
pàwàt	history
pék plèm plèm	flood, full of water
pàh	north
pèɛŋ	round of wine
péɛt pòr	bee eater
pháan	kill
phon	rain (Lao)
phòn	get over, get away
pîi	year
pkúut	put in, let in
plò	mute, unable to talk
pnmàh	feed
pntràk	shelf
pntràk lòok	shelf at the back of the house
pntràp	gift
pŋkòp	to complete the roof of the house
pɔ́h	bamboo clapper
préɛs	leafless tree
prìiŋ	long wooden drum
prlòŋ	door
prlòŋ kntrùum	gate or entrance on ground level
prlòŋ lòok	back door of the house
prwèɛw	kind of cicada
pryɔ̀ɔŋ	dragon

pté	earth, soil
púas	barking deer
pùuc ktáŋ	rice wine in a jar
ràaŋ cɔ́ɔk	white crested laughing thrush
ré	swidden field
ré	porcupine
rìc	kind of bird, munia
rɨ́am ré	clearing a new field
rklàk	kind of spirit
Rmèet	Rmeet language
rmlàaŋ	sleeping place for the house father and mother
rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ	staircase or ladder
rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ lòok	ladder at the back
róoy	spirit
róoy h'éep	accident spirit
róoy mɨaŋ	district spirit
róoy smlèɛŋ	kind of spirit
róoy tèɛŋ	village spirit
róoy yáap	waste spirit
rŋpùŋ	door
rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ	ladder
rŋtɔ̀ɔŋ tɨ́ɨŋ	wooden stair
rùŋ	cook rice
rwàay ɔ̀ɔk	tiger spirit
r'ɔ̀ɔŋ	cheers
sáam	three
scáaŋ	elephant
séswèɛs	kind of cicada
sáŋ cŋáar	green things
sɨ́i	day
sɨ́i nè	birthday
sɨaŋ	pig
sɨ́aŋ prì	wild pig
slúŋ	pool, lake
smlèɛŋ	kind of liana; kind of bad spirit
sntrì	altar where the family feeds their ancestors
sŋáay kɛ́ɛ	the period of nine–ten a.m.
sŋáay kɛ́ɛ lúaŋ	the period of eleven a.m
sŋcrí	taboo
sŋsáak	an animal which has been killed by a tiger or died by itself, leftover food
spɔ́	biggest bamboo
sprɛ́ŋ, sprɛ́ŋ	glimmer of fireflies
srmà	get a cold
srmà tryìs	ague
súu èem	strengthen the father-in-law's soul
súu kháay	strengthen the son-in-law's soul
s'ɔ́ɔŋ	tree
tá céɛc	forktail totem

tá rìc	munia totem
tá tmɔ̀ɔŋ	civet cat totem
tá tráak	water buffalo totem
tàa	at
táay	elder brother
tàk	fetch
tál	south
taphia	old term for tasaeng
tasaeng	administrative subdistrict comprising several villages; also the head of such a subdistrict
téɛŋ	make
téɛŋ kúŋ	sacrifice to the village spirit
tìi	place, at
tìi ré	field area
tmlùy	hang
tmprà	fireplace
tmràac yùun	sound of grasshoppers
tóo sát	animal
tóŋ káh	kind of water container
trà	stamping tube of bamboo
tráak	buffalo
trhíl	kind of tree
trnàŋ màh	tray, place where the family eats
trú	kind of tree
tryìs	shake
túut ryɔ̀ɔl	kind of tree
twá	fern
wàak	worm
wáaŋ	sixty-day cycle
Wáaŋ nám	bigger Wáaŋ
Wáaŋ nè	smaller Wáaŋ
wè	left
wèey	keep (Lao)
wèɛt	buy
yàam	cry
yàan	kettlegong
yáap	use up quickly, be wasted
yàt	stay, is
yàt cám ré	staying in the field
yèl yèl	kind of cicada
yèm	when
yèɛr	kind of cicada
Yùan	Yùan dialect

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